United Nations S/PV.7658

Security Council
Seventy-first year

Provisional

7658th meeting

Monday, 28 March 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Ms. Delgado/Mr. Gaspar Martins	(Angola)
Members:	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Mahmoud
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mrs. Schwalger
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zagaynov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

Women and peace and security

The role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa

Note verbale dated 7 March 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Angola to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2016/219)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Women and peace and security

The role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa

Note verbale dated 7 March 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Angola to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2016/219)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Algeria, Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Ethiopia, Georgia, Hungary, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Namibia, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Rwanda, Slovakia, South Africa, Sweden, Thailand and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs; His Excellency Mr. Macharia Kamau, Permanent Representative of Kenya and Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission; His Excellency Mr. Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; and Ms. Paleki Ayang, Executive Director of the South Sudan Women's Empowerment Network.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Ioannis Vrailas, Deputy Head of the European Union Delegation to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations to participate in this meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/219, which contains a note verbale dated 7 March 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Angola to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration.

I now give the floor to Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka.

Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka: Last year, the Secretary-General identified four priority themes common to all three reviews on peace and security that were undertaken in 2014. This Council debate addresses the relationship between two of the four themes, specifically the need to focus on the prevention of violence and to pay attention to the critical importance of gender equality.

The critical role of women in conflict prevention is increasingly being acknowledged even though it is still rarely visible. It is often missing from discussions about peace and security that take place at the highest levels, which is why this briefing is most appreciated. Today, I am pleased to share specific examples of conflict prevention led by women from across the African continent. These examples are about the deliberate prevention of violence while ensuring gender equality, and are not unique to Africa. Women in the Middle East, Central and Eastern Europe, Asia and Latin America have made similar contributions.

I will start with women's situation rooms, which monitor and prevent election-related violence. In the past five years, women's situation rooms have been established in Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Uganda. The model is being replicated in a growing list of countries across the African continent, with our support. These mechanisms are established during the electoral period to train and deploy female observers and monitors, receive and analyse hundreds of complaints and reports of violence or intimidation, and refer those to the relevant authorities for follow-up. Often, nationally renowned women are mobilized to engage with heads of political parties, security sector institutions, and leaders of faith-based entities to respond to situations as they arise. They save lives, diffuse and de-escalate dangerous situations. They support women candidates and fight discrimination against women in the electoral process and gender-based election violence and harassment.

Our research also shows that women play a key role in de-escalating tensions and preventing radicalization in their families. In Mali, the most important influence for the successful reintegration of many ex-combatants has been the women in their families and communities. In the broader Sahel region, the income status and resilience of women have been boosted by programmes that address the gender gap in access to land and other productive assets. It is that status and resilience that have provided a safeguard against radicalization and economic, political and climate shocks.

In poor areas in Kenya, women's organizations are dedicated to working to identify and prevent the spread of radicalization. Mothers are using their influence to help their sons and their peers to resist recruitment by armed groups. Their success saves lives. In Burundi, hundreds of women mediators are working tirelessly to address local conflicts, and they prevent and stop the escalation of tensions. Women's empowerment contributes to our defence against militarism and violent extremism, and requires our greater support and investment.

In 2015, we learned from the global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, which highlighted that countries with lower levels of gender inequality are less likely to resort to the use of force, and that the security of women is one of the most reliable indicators of the peacefulness of a State. We also learned that the spending patterns of women contribute directly to post-conflict social recovery. Women are the first to notice attacks on their rights and freedoms and the militarization and radicalization of individuals in their families and communities. They possess important insights and intelligence that are key to decision-making.

Revamping and strengthening the prevention work of the United Nations must include more frequent deliberations of the Council that are informed by the perspectives and analysis of women on the ground. That is why I am pleased today to brief the Council alongside Ms. Anyang today, who is one of our civil-society partners in resilience and conflict prevention among women in South Sudan. The practice of hearing from civil society representatives is now common in the thematic debates of the Council, and that is important. However, it should be extended to consultations on country-specific situations, the work of the Council's subsidiary bodies, and during Council visiting missions.

For example, the Counter-Terrorism Committee should regularly consult with women's organizations to ensure that our efforts to counter violent extremism are not shutting down space and funds for the civil society actors who are key to prevention and saving lives. Council members should demand a robust gender analysis in the reports they receive and in all atrocity-prevention efforts. The new Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security, which held its first meeting last month, is an important step in ensuring consistent and quality information flows to the Council. UN-Women is proud to serve as the secretariat for that new Group.

Existing early warning systems should find ways of linking directly with women-led monitoring and prevention initiatives at the local level, which are are happy to facilitate. Women are critical to intelligence-gathering. Women need to be resourced so that they do more. The commitment to allocating at least 15 per cent of peacebuilding funds to gender equality and women's empowerment must become a reality, and extended to all efforts at preventing and countering violent extremism. Women's organizations must receive the political and financial support needed to engage in violence prevention, mediation, and diplomacy. Investing in gender equality as part of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1) is the best recipe for structural, long-term prevention.

The work of women peacemakers takes many forms in Africa and elsewhere, but their commitment is consistent, dependable and universal. It is also directly linked to strengthening efforts in conflict prevention, which is so needed in the face of today's complex peace and security environment.

The President: I thank Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Zerihoun.

Mr. Zerihoun: I thank you, Madam, for this opportunity to address this open debate on the role of women in conflict prevention and mediation in Africa, on behalf of the Department of Political Affairs.

The Secretary-General has made the advancement of women a top priority since he assumed office and has instructed the senior management of the Secretariat to place the issue at the centre of what they do. This system-wide focus signalled the beginning of an important reorientation, informed by the basic fact that women living with conflict have strategic knowledge and networks that can contribute to its resolution.

Recent research has also established that women's participation in peace talks facilitates not only the conclusion of agreements and their implementation but — crucially — also the sustainability of peace.

For the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), promoting women's effective participation in conflict mediation and addressing their specific needs in peacemaking efforts has been a priority since the Department undertook 15 women, peace and security commitments in 2010. As many Council members are aware, the Department monitors and reports annually to the Security Council on progress made in implementing these commitments.

As a result of senior leadership and institutional buy-in, combined with a systematic effort to mainstream these commitments in its work, the Department's conflict prevention work has become increasingly inclusive. Since 2012, all United Nations mediation support teams have included women. United Nations co-led mediation processes consult with women's representatives on the delegations of negotiating parties. These positive developments have improved the inclusion of stronger gender-relevant provisions in ceasefires and peace agreements.

To advance these efforts, the Department of Political Affairs has developed a high-level mediation-skills training. Half of the participants are women and the training aims to enhance gender parity and the future character and configuration of international peacemaking. To build institutional capacity, the Department conducts semi-annual training on gender/women, peace and security. As a result, some 164 envoys and senior mediation actors have taken part in the high-level seminar series on gender and inclusive mediation.

The Department also continues to implement its Joint Strategy with UN-Women on Gender and Mediation. It helps build mediation capacity for envoys and mediation teams by providing gender expertise and training, while UN-Women strengthens the capacity of regional, national and local women leaders and peace coalitions, and supports access opportunities for women in peace negotiations. We also document relevant lessons learned and develop practical guidance materials for mediators. The United Nations Guidance on Effective Mediation and the Guidance for Mediators on Addressing Conflict-related Sexual Violence in Ceasefire and Peace Agreements are yielding concrete results on the ground, where it matters the most.

We must, however, not forget that despite the concerted efforts of international and regional organizations, as well as of national Governments, to eliminate discrimination and promote the empowerment of women, unequal access and opportunities for women's participation in political decision-making processes persist worldwide. As highlighted by all three peace and security reviews that were undertaken last year, prioritizing prevention and inclusive political solutions has never been more urgent. It is only by uniting our efforts that we will be able to advance the principles underpinning the Charter of the United Nations.

Peace processes afford unique opportunities for promoting women's effective participation. The United Nations therefore supports regional and subregional organizations by promoting and strengthening regional capacities for inclusive mediation to enable the more effective participation of women at all levels of peacemaking. This cooperation is built on the knowledge that women's effective participation in transformative decision-making processes will address underlying inequalities and social divisions. It also addresses the specific needs of women and helps to incorporate a stronger gender perspective in reconstruction, reconciliation and post-conflict peacebuilding.

During the past decade, we have sharpened our preventive tools and achieved some progress. The good offices of the Secretary-General, our regional offices and our cooperation with regional organizations have yielded positive results. Today, about 85 per cent of United Nations mediation involves working closely with regional and subregional organizations. To cite but one example, the Department of Political Affairs has been working very closely with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) following the signing of a framework for cooperation between the two organizations in September 2010, focusing on the need to strengthen partnership in prevention, peacemaking and mediation. In close coordination with UN-Women, DPA continues to complement SADC efforts to advance the promotion of the women, peace and security agenda in the region. Additional policy initiatives include the development of a framework for mainstreaming gender into SADC's peace and security architecture and a strategy for combating sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. Regionally, we welcomed the appointment by the African Union, in 2014, of its first Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security.

Our work on elections also underscores the centrality of women's participation in decision-making processes. The United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel actively enhances the role of women in conflict prevention and political participation. In 2011, the Office started training and building the mediation and negotiation capacities of women and set up a network of 32 women mediators. Those mediators have moved on to build the capacity of other women in the region, and have since contributed to national dialogue processes in Mali and Guinea. The Office also helped advance women's participation in electoral processes in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria and Togo by supporting the adoption of legislation on gender parity and quotas to help women assume political office.

Noticeable efforts have also been made by the African Union and other partners in the region to ensure that gender is more systematically integrated in electoral processes, including in election observation. It is encouraging to note that currently the average rate of women members of parliament in Africa is slightly above the global average.

To promote women's political participation in Central Africa, the United Nations Office for Central Africa, in cooperation with its regional partner — the Economic Community of Central African States — in 2014 organized a gender workshop on the role of women in electoral processes in the region. That effort has helped the Central Africa region to establish a platform for the promotion of women's participation in politics. Ahead of elections in Chad next month, the Office is taking steps to facilitate a national political dialogue. A workshop on the participation of women was organized to feed into the broader dialogue with civil society organizations.

The case for inclusive preventive diplomacy is compelling. Experience has shown that, if we are present, with early diplomatic initiatives and by actively engaging civil society — notably women's organizations — with the support of the international community and the necessary resources, we stand a better chance of helping prevent and resolve conflicts and in making political stability and peace more sustainable.

The President: I thank Mr. Zerihoun for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Kamau.

Mr. Kamau: I wish to thank you, Madam, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council today in my capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission during this important and timely open debate on the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa. I also thank you, Madam, for providing us with a comprehensive concept paper (S/2016/219, annex) to guide the debate.

Since its establishment, the Peacebuilding Commission has supported the idea that women must participate in peacebuilding processes and contribute to decision-making in the reconstruction of their countries. The Peacebuilding Commission strongly believes that women's participation is crucial to inclusive, participatory and sustainable peacebuilding processes. The report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the review of peacebuilding architecture strongly reaffirms that ensuring women's full participation in peacebuilding processes is "crucial to the success of economic recovery, political legitimacy and social cohesion" (*S/2015/490, annex, para. 56*).

That understanding of women's role in peacebuilding is widely shared. The Security Council, in its landmark resolution 1325 (2000) and in subsequent resolutions, including resolution 2242 (2015), adopted by the present Council, has given us a broad normative framework that I believe is universally supported by Member States. Yet as the report from the Advisory Group of Experts and as the global study on resolution 1325 (2000) reminded us last year, much remains to be done in practice to turn global commitments into reality on the ground.

That is also true of the work of Peacebuilding Commission. During its entire lifetime, the Commission has demonstrated a keen interest in gender equality and women's empowerment. Mirroring international policy developments, particularly the presentation of the Secretary-General's report (S/2010/466) on women and peacebuilding, and including his Seven-Point Action Plan, in 2010, the Commission developed its own declaration on women's economic empowerment for peacebuilding in 2013. Equally, the Security Council has adopted various resolutions on women and peace and security since the late 2000s.

While the Peacebuilding Commission's country-specific instruments of engagement recognize the role of women in peacebuilding, translating formal commitments into concrete action on the ground has not been as systematic and efficient as we would like it to be. The high expectations for the transformative change and strengthening of women's participation in peace and security anticipated in resolution 1325 (2000) has not been fully delivered.

Yet despite the persistent exclusion of women from the loci of power and influence in many societies across the world, women have continued to make a significant contribution to developing inclusive approaches to security, peacebuilding and conflict prevention in their own unique ways. As such, women remain a resource that has not been effectively utilized or enabled to build sustainable peace.

Hindrances to women's participation in peace and security include cynical cultural practices that maintain patriarchal attitudes and norms; insufficient political will across the board to fully implement resolution 1325 (2000) and associated resolutions; militarized interventions and approaches to conflict resolution that tend to crowd out other organic initiatives within society that help build resilience, particularly during peacekeeping and countering violent extremism, which put women at a disadvantage; and the absence of gender-sensitive economic recovery following conflict, which poses a barrier to women empowerment during transitions. Similarly, top-down bureaucratic processes in implementing the women and peace and security agenda have neglected the local ownership aspects that a complementary bottom-up approach would help bring about.

Those manifest bottlenecks have compelled the Peacebuilding Commission to embark upon the development of its first gender strategy, with the support of the Peacebuilding Support Office and UN-Women. The strategy, which we expect to adopt before July, spells out specific recommendations to strengthen the substantive, cross-cutting integration of gender perspectives in all Peacebuilding Commission country-specific thematic and strategic engagement. It identifies thematic priority areas such as women's participation in peacebuilding/mediation processes and prevention. It also identifies post-conflict governance and leadership, the rule of law, economic empowerment and access to basic social infrastructure — while emphasizing that men and boys need to be engaged as partners.

The Peacebuilding Commission will continue to use its unique leverage to advocate actively for dedicated technical expertise on gender equality and peacebuilding, as well as dedicated funding within the United Nations, and also among its national and international partners. The combination of senior leadership commitment, specialized expertise and dedicated financial resources is what can make a real difference. Her Excellency Ms. Julia Duncan-Cassel, Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection of Liberia, reminded us just last week, in her address to the Commission on the Status of Women, that Liberia has been able to make great strides towards sustaining peace and empowering women economically thanks to the commitment of the national authorities, the in-country expertise from the UN-Women country office and catalytic funding from the Peacebuilding Fund. We should also not forget that Liberia is a country governed by a woman, and it was that woman who led the country out of a very difficult transition from war to peace, and the same woman who steered the country through another transition, a very difficult one, from a horrific epidemic to normalcy.

In Burundi, as stated by the Executive Diretor of UN-Women this morning, the same combination of leadership, strategic funding from the Peacebuilding Fund and in-country expertise allowed UN-Women to support a network of 534 women mediators working across all municipalities. By their count, women mediators addressed over 5,000 conflicts at the local level in 2015 alone. They have been tackling familial, social and land-related conflicts at the community level, which can easily become politicized and risk destabilizing communities. The mediators promote non-violence and dialogue, and work to counter rumours and exaggerated fears with verifiable information. Clearly, the inclusion of women is essential for achieving lasting peace in Burundi, and the experiences of the women mediators could be instructive for all stakeholders involved in ongoing dialogue processes.

Peace will be sustainable only with the participation of all the relevant national stakeholders, including civil society. The recent adoption by the Security Council of resolution 2250 (2015), on youth, peace and security, was an important step towards greater inclusivity in peacebuilding. The role of young women and men in conflict prevention and resolution and in peacebuilding is finally getting the recognition that it deserves. The Peacebuilding Commission also firmly believes that young women are central actors, not just for the future of their countries but also for the present — starting right now.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that the Peacebuilding Commission is committed to advocating on behalf of women and young people and to using its intergovernmental approach and its convening power and leverage to engage national partners, to open up space for their participation and to help ensure that they receive the acknowledgment and dedicated support that they deserve. The Peacebuilding Commission gender strategy is an important step in the process of operationalizing a transformative women and peace and security agenda.

If I may, Madam President, I would like to add a special personal emphasis on the issue of gender. I have just come from Kenya, and I have witnessed again the ruin that 100 years of colonial and post-colonial policies have caused to the place of women in our culture and in our society. Women in Kenya, even today, 50 years after independence, remain firmly at the bottom on the rungs of social progress and empowerment. I cannot emphasize enough how conscious I am of the fact that gender is a central factor in the delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1) and the better future that we all want.

Realizing the ambition of a better more inclusive future and a sustainable world that achieves sustainable development — with sustainable peace and security for all at its core — will require that we respond forcefully and with determination to the issue and condition of women and girls in our societies. The centrality of gender issues within families and communities, especially with regard to the protection and promotion of girls and women, cannot be gainsaid. That is equally true within, and among, nations. That is why we are having this debate here today in the Security Council. But words without actions are shameful and futile. Global peace and harmony are intrinsically tied up with the promotion and protection of the human rights of women and girls everywhere. We must act accordingly. Let there be no doubt about that.

The President: I thank Mr. Kamau for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. António.

Mr. António: On behalf of the Commission of the African Union, allow me, Madam President, to start by commending you for convening this timely and very important debate, and also to thank you for this opportunity to brief the Security Council and share our views on a matter of great importance to the African Union. Your presence here to preside over today's discussion highlights the critical importance of this debate and bears witness to your personal commitment and that of the Republic of Angola to the fundamental purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. It also serves to highlight Angola's determination to make a substantial contribution to the work of the Security Council. I also thank the previous speakers for their insightful presentations.

Today's debate provides an excellent opportunity that we must seize in order to demonstrate our commitment to take forward the ambitious recommendations emerging from the recent United Nations policy reviews on peace and security issues. The role of women in preventing and resolving conflicts must be made a reality, rather than allowed to remain a mere statement that dates back several decades. Our discourse on this issue must include no longer looking at women merely as victims, but rather recognize and encourage their demonstrated capacities to be part of peace and development efforts.

The experiences of many countries have clearly shown that lasting peace cannot be achieved, and reconstruction will never succeed, with half the population excluded and marginalized. To cite an example, members may recall the decisive role played by the women of Liberia in the signing of the 2003 Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement through the efforts of the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace. Africa cannot afford to ignore the role of women if we are to realize the vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful continent. The Republic of Angola, which you represent today, Madam, is another example. Angolan women not only played a critical role in the liberation of the country from colonialism, but they also stood for peace and demonstrated pan-Africanism in the early years of the country's independence. In fact, we all remember that the country that you represent today, Madam, hosted the headquarters of the Pan-African Women's Organization in the early years of independence.

The issue of women and peace and security remains a priority, both on the agenda of the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government as well as on the agenda of the African Union Peace and Security Council. Indeed, the African Union declared 2010-2020 to be the African Women's Decade, with the overarching theme of gender equality and women's empowerment. The year 2015 was the Year of Women's

Empowerment and Development towards Africa's Agenda 2063, while 2016 is the Year of Human Rights, with particular focus on the rights of women. By choosing to put women at the centre of the continent's deliberations, the African Union sought to reinforce the continent's resolve to bring down all types of barriers that impede the emancipation of women and girls in Africa and to strengthen their agency and rights, especially in priority areas such as education, health, participation in decision-making at all levels, economic empowerment and peace and security.

In January 2014, the African Union became the first continental organization to appoint a Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, with the specific mandate to ensure that the voices of women and children, particularly those affected by conflict, are heard and to advocate at the highest levels for the rightful participation and contribution of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

To enhance the protection of women's rights, the AU seeks to promote international and regional commitments on peace and security, as well as to strengthen women's participation in peace and security efforts through the AU Peace and Security Department, the Peace and Security Council and the Panel of the Wise.

Starting with the leadership of its own paramount continental institution, Africa adopted the principle of parity and acted on it. Indeed, the AU Commission has achieved parity in its leadership and is now moving towards 50/50 workforce parity, in line with the AU gender policy adopted in 2009.

Furthermore, to enhance the role of women in peace and security, the African Union Commission launched a five-year gender, peace and security programme. The programme is designed to serve as a framework for the development of effective strategies and mechanisms for the increased participation of women in the promotion of peace and security. It also aims to enhance the protection of women in conflict and post-conflict situations in Africa.

The African Union has also conducted training with Member States on women peace mediators, women election observers and gender advisers, and it has succeeded in deploying female peacekeepers and female police in peace-support operations such as the African Union Mission in Somalia.

Despite the progress made so far, a great deal remains to be done to ensure women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution as well as in post-conflict peacebuilding. Policies are plentiful; where we fall short is in their implementation. It is from this perspective that the African Union is developing a continental results framework to strengthen the monitoring of the implementation by Member States of their commitments on the women and peace and security agenda.

In our view, more efforts are needed from both the United Nations and the African Union in the following areas.

First, the proportion of the women in the police component of peace operations must be increased.

Secondly, we must ensure that the terms of reference of mediation and peacebuilding processes have a clear component of women's participation as the basis of their delivery and accountability towards the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

Thirdly, training programmes on women and peace and security must be made mandatory. The AU has already begun to integrate such training into its African Standby Force programme.

And, fourthly, we must invest more in conflict prevention and in women's prevention initiatives.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Ayang.

Ms. Ayang: I wish to thank you, Madam President, for the invitation to provide a voice for the thousands of women across Africa who are risking their lives to prevent conflict and bring peace to their communities and countries. Although there have been repeated commitments made in this Chamber, and the Security Council, the African Union and the international community have evidence that has demonstrated time and again that the broad, meaningful and effective inclusion of women increases the durability of peace, we continue to be excluded from these efforts. The world, and Africa in particular, needs to move beyond the stereotypical images of women as victims in conflict and instead take into account their complex experiences as fighters, peacebuilders, protectors and community leaders.

I have seen first-hand the power that women have in preventing and resolving conflict in my own country. On 15 December 2013, the hopes and dreams of the South Sudanese people of living in a peaceful and independent country vanished. I remember vividly the night that conflict broke out: the sound of heavy weapons and artillery enveloped us as bullet holes riddled my home. War had returned to my country. But I was one of the lucky ones, able to put my family of six into a car and drive to the Ugandan border; but I knew I had to return. Thankfully, I was not alone: women from widely differing ideological and political perspectives joined together to reject the conflict and the violence and created a platform to suggest peaceful solutions to the conflict. We mobilized across the country, and in Nairobi, Kampala and Addis Ababa, pushing that agenda.

Women's efforts were deployed at all levels, from grass-roots to international. Inside South Sudan, women were crossing tribal lines to de-escalate tensions and prevent further conflict. In a protection-of-civilians site that was segregated between Dinka and Nuer tribes, a Dinka woman joined with a Nuer to start a group in which women from both tribes would meet and discuss how to stop the violence. While the men wanted to fight over their tribal differences, women bridged the divide and reduced tensions within the community.

The scale of sexual violence in our country has been shocking. As the most recent report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights documenting the crimes committed in South Sudan noted, "Women are in a state of permanent insecurity, and are compelled to take great risks" (*A/HRC/31/49, para. 36*).

To help prevent and address these horrendous acts, the South Sudan Women's Empowerment Network, of which I am the Executive Director, created community networks that worked on preventing sexual and gender-based violence through awareness activities, sensitization training and advocacy. These networks were led and run by men. Men must be meaningfully engaged in these programmes to ensure that the violence subsides and the stigma is diminished.

Women's advocacy groups also began to form to ensure that women's voices and experiences were considered by the largely male negotiators determining the future of South Sudan. I am a member of one such group called the Task Force on the Engagement of Women, supported by the Institute for Inclusive Security. We advocated to the warring parties and key international stakeholders the signing of a cessation of hostilities agreement and the promotion of inclusive peace talks that address the underlying root causes of the conflict. These women were some of the only people whom both parties trusted, allowing them to send messages back and forth on their behalf.

As the Security Council and the international community's attention turns to the 31 March deadline for the parties to report on how they are implementing the August 2015 peace agreement, accounting for the role of women in monitoring and implementing this accord is crucial. Women must serve as mediators, community liaisons and monitors throughout this process if the accord is to ultimately be successful, and I urge the Security Council to do more to ensure that this happens.

Evidence of women's ability to prevent and resolve conflict spans the African continent. With limited resources, and in spite of threats from their own communities and sometimes families, women organize peace marches, advocate for enhanced peace and security policies, and lead reconciliation efforts across conflict lines.

In order to support these efforts, I urge the Security Council to do the following.

First, it must invest in programmes aimed at increasing women's inclusion in conflict-prevention and resolution strategies. These programmes should be developed in consultation with diverse local populations and designed to address the underlying root causes of conflict and promote women-led early-warning mechanisms.

I also urge the Security Council to promote women's meaningful inclusion in elections, so that their needs and concerns are better reflected in peace and security policymaking. Support should be provided for constitutional reforms that require a quota in parliaments as one mechanism to get more women into decision-making roles.

I also urge the Security Council to increase support for the inclusion of women in national security forces and police, including in all United Nations peacekeeping missions. Furthermore, the Council should require United Nations consultations with women-led civil-society organizations to advance gender-specific and community priorities in peace and security processes.

In addition to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, I want the Council to take away two things from my remarks today.

First, we can continue to discuss strategies of conflict prevention and resolution, but they will be ineffective unless immediate attention goes to addressing and preventing the systematic, deliberate and widespread sexual violence in South Sudan and on the continent. The scale of sexual violence in my country has destroyed the social fabric of communities and threatens to dismantle the already fragile peace. Therefore, I urge the Security Council to take action.

First, the Council must insist on accountability for atrocities committed by all warring parties, armed groups, security forces and peacekeepers. Accountability for sexual violence must be prioritized, and efforts must be made to ensure that transitional justice mechanisms, including community-led programmes, such as truth-telling and reconciliation, are gender sensitive and responsive to the unique needs of women.

Secondly, little attention or support has gone towards ensuring women's participation in what can be the most critical aspect of the peace process, that is, implementation. Therefore, I urge the Security Council to demand that the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission in South Sudan, and any monitoring mechanisms established in the region for other conflicts, ensure that women's representation and participation are integrated throughout the monitoring and implementation of peace agreements, in coordination with United Nations peacekeeping mandates.

The President: I thank Ms. Ayang for her briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as the Minister for Family and the Promotion of Women of Angola.

It is a great honour to address the Security Council on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Angola and to offer some insights on the important issue of women and peace and security, with particular emphasis on the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa.

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the briefers for their significant contributions to the subject matter under consideration. I welcome the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka; the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun; the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Macharia Kamau; Ambassador Téte Antonio, Permanent Observer of the African Union; and Ms. Paleki Ayang of the South Sudan Women's Empowerment Network.

The African continent is still engulfed in conflict situations, some of them dragging on for more than a generation. Civil strife and fratricidal conflicts have greatly affected the social, economic and human development of the continent. Besides the colonial legacy, policies of social and political exclusion, coupled with widespread economic inequalities and violations of human rights, are relevant root causes of those conflicts. Such situations have exacted a heavy burden, primarily on the civilian populations of the countries affected, as well as on the international community, which has been required to intervene in order to contain the spillover effects of the conflicts.

It is universally understood that prevention is the most effective way to avoid the human, social and financial costs caused by conflicts. It is also understood that the best means to prevent conflict is to build societies based on principles of inclusivity, with equal rights accorded to all citizens without exclusion or discrimination and with the prevalence of the rule of law. It is also understood that the resolution of conflicts should take place through the channels of dialogue, mediation and the compatibility of diverging interests, which is possible only when dialogue and mediation lead to meaningful compromise and everybody's interests are safeguarded.

The Security Council is currently dealing with a large number of such conflicts — deploying military means through peacekeeping operations, after the signing of peace deals and managing post-conflict situations. The Council has also established a number of political special missions of a preventive nature, and the Secretary-General or his envoys have exercised good offices and mediation efforts to seek to avert the outbreak of conflicts.

In the search for more effective means to deal with conflict situations, in 2015 the Secretary-General launched three major peace and security reviews. They include the High-level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, the Advisory Group of Experts for the Review of Peacebuilding Architecture and the global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security.

The reviews agreed on the postulate that the greatest responsibility of the international community is the prevention of armed conflict and highlighted the critical need for greater investment in prevention strategies. The reviews furthermore stressed the value added of the women and peace and security agenda to conflict prevention and the potential for early warning in gender-sensitive analysis by identifying the drivers of conflict, such as changing dynamics, namely, at family and community-level relations. It also highlighted that conflict prevention could be greatly improved by engaging with women, given their grass-roots knowledge, especially in providing relevant indicators for dealing with the threats of conflict and for the implementation of preventive measures.

The global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) recognizes the importance of enhancing the role of women and of their participation at all phases and levels of peace processes, given its potential for accelerating the attainment of solutions to conflict and the sustainability of peace. Women's participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts can take on different forms and dimensions, inter alia, direct involvement in formal peace negotiations, consultative commissions, public policies, decision-making, national dialogues, peacebuilding and comprehensive reforms, leading to democratization processes.

In addition, besides ensuring the inclusion of gender-sensitive language in peace agreements, women can bring more than gender issues to the negotiating table by instilling the holistic approach that a peace process entails. The global study refers to paradigmatic cases in Liberia, Kenya and Burundi, where women's groups have achieved significant results through the exercise of a strong influence in the negotiating processes, by exerting pressure for the start and conclusion of negotiations and, in some cases, mobilizing for the signing of a peace agreement or, alternatively, promoting measures to prevent a new cycle of violence, addressing the root causes of conflict, thereby contributing to changing power relations in society.

Women and children are the main victims in today's armed conflicts. Therefore, their participation in those processes becomes a crucial issue. Their voices must be heard in the prevention of conflict, in the negotiation of peace settlements and in ensuring that their interests are taken into account in post-conflict reconstruction. It is of pivotal importance that the institutional mechanisms established in Africa promote an environment conducive to the meaningful participation of women in peace and security, while reasserting the full commitments of the African States to that objective.

The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, the African Union's five-year Gender, Peace and Security Programme and the emphasis on women's leadership on issues related to peace and security are achievements translating a renewed awareness of the essential role played by women.

Women in Angola have participated decisively in all efforts towards the attainment of peace. The immediate post-conflict period included women's direct involvement in peacebuilding and national reconstruction. Women were instrumental in providing psychological support to the victims of the armed conflict as counsellors of peace, national reconciliation and social healing. The Government established counselling centres to raise awareness on their economic, social, political and civil rights and as a tool for families' participation in the country's development.

Through partnerships with civil society organizations, efforts have been deployed in order to strengthen women's participation in the country's political and economic life. The non-governmental organization Roots of Peace was created with the aim of bringing together women from all political parties represented in Parliament to participate in the efforts to consolidate peace and democracy. Angola joined the campaign He for She, which is aimed at raising the awareness of men and boys for the eradication of all forms of gender-based violence.

Angola has been playing a role in the preservation of peace and security in Africa, especially in the Great Lakes region, in promoting a culture of peace based on experience gained in conflict-prevention processes, in the promotion of dialogue and national reconciliation. Today, we have many women at all levels of the army and the police. In my delegation, we have a woman brigadier. Women also participate in electoral observer missions.

Finally, it is our expectation that the new awareness on the key role women play in social, political and economic life will lead to a world where women can effectively carry out their responsibilities and fully exercise of their rights. We are sure that if strong political will and commitment are fully brought into action towards the attainment of such goals, women will make a tangible contribution to building a more just and peaceful world.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank the briefers for their insights and I welcome Ms. Paleki Ayang to the Council. We should hear the voices of women activists from civil society in the Chamber more often.

I would like to begin with the words of another activist, Nobel Laureate Leymah Gbowee. In 2003, her group Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace successfully pressed Charles Taylor to attend peace talks. Talking afterwards, she said,

> "We are now taking this stand to secure the future of our children, because we believe, as custodians of society, tomorrow our children will ask us, 'Mama, what was your role during the crisis?'"

"What was your role during the crisis?" The answer to that question for so many women in Africa is not negotiator; it is not envoy; it is not delegate even, and that needs to change. It is not just about ending gender inequality. It is not just a women's issue; it is a peace issue. When women's voices are heard in peace processes, in negotiations and in State-building, the chances of a lasting peace increase. If we are serious about truly resolving conflicts and preserving peace — not just for hours, but for generations — we must heed the words of Leymah Gbowee and our briefer Paleki Ayang. They demonstrate just how powerful community-based activism can be. Just think how powerful those women's voices could have been had they actually been in the room at key times in peace processes. So, whether in Africa or in any other part of the world, we need to make sure that women are playing the fullest role in conflict resolution. I am proud that all future United Kingdom-hosted peacebuilding events will ensure that women's voices are heard. If the rest of the Council were to follow suit, then we would send a strong message to the rest of the world.

To support that effort, we have to increase women's participation in politics and society. That means delivering on the commitments we made in resolutions 1325 (2000), 1889 (2009), 2242 (2015) and so many others because breaking down barriers facing women in peace talks requires breaking down barriers facing women across society. It means helping girls stay in school, improving health care and, yes, tackling sexual violence. At its heart, it is about ending discrimination against women. We all have a part to play. In Somalia, the United Kingdom is helping make health services available to over 1 million Somali women and children, but also providing legal assistance to thousands of Somali women and will soon be supporting initiatives that boost their participation in politics too.

But this issue will not be solved by one country alone. That is why the United Kingdom is contributing $1 million to the Global Acceleration Instrument for Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action (GAI). By funding the GAI, we can all offer material support that can break down those barriers. In Burundi, a network of women mediators was able to deal with 5,200 local conflicts in 2015. That is over 14 a day. Thanks to the GAI, they are now scaling up their activities. At a time when the Council has been so frustrated by the crisis in Burundi, it is heartening to see how powerful women's civil society can be in their local mediation efforts.

Ultimately, however, supporting this effort requires more than just our money. When the Council visited Mali, Guinea Bissau and Senegal earlier this month, there was not a single female representative of the Council on the trip. And even at Headquarters in New York, only two of the 15 Security Council member countries are represented by a woman at this debate. Since we call upon Africa's leaders to do more to bring women into conflict prevention and resolution, let us also heed the call ourselves. What signal does it send when the primary body for preserving international peace and security only has one woman among its 15 permanent representatives. What message does it send to that young girl in Somalia who dreams of becoming president, or to those who want to answer the question "What was your role?" with something other than "survivor"? If we want half of the world's population to have a say in conflict prevention and resolution, then let us begin in this building. That is why the United Kingdom has been clear that we need as many credible women as possible to apply to be the next Secretary-General. We have had three so far and I hope that there are more to come.

It is time to make history and bring about a historic moment that is long overdue. All things being equal, we hope that this will be the year that we appoint a woman to be Secretary-General for the first time. When asked "What was your role?", she will be able to say that she was at the forefront of the United Nations action to prevent conflict and resolve crisis and represent the entire world, not just half of it.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank you, Madam President, for chairing and organizing this open debate and I thank Under-Secretary-General Mlambo-Ngcuka for her briefing and her stewardship of UN-Women. I would like to extend a special thanks also to Ms. Paleki Ayang for her briefing on the perspective of civil society. Indeed, I thank all five rule 39 briefers for their very useful perspectives this morning.

Today's debate provides us all with an excellent opportunity to take stock of the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in Africa. Quite frankly, I hope today's session will do much more than that. This debate should also help more women gain positions of leadership and seats at the negotiating table where issues of peace and security are decided, especially as women and girls face more complex and emerging threats, including those posed by the harsh reality of terrorism and violent extremism.

It is undeniable that some progress on the women and peace and security agenda has been made across Africa since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) in 2000. We appreciate the efforts of the 18 African countries that have developed national action plans that seek to institutionalize the greater participation of women throughout government and society. But there is still much work to be done. I would like to suggest three areas where we should redouble our efforts: first, in helping women overcome systemic obstacles to political participation; secondly, in addressing gender-based violence; and, thirdly, in tranlating the women and peace and security norms established by the Security Council into concrete success in the real world.

When women actively participate at all levels of political decision-making, we know that we are all safer, that our efforts at peacebuilding are stronger and that around the world Constitutions and peace agreements are more inclusive, just and lasting. But women in Africa continue to face, and to overcome, systemic obstacles to their political participation at all levels of decision-making. In February 2013, for example, 11 countries in the Great Lakes region of Africa signed a peace accord to address decades of violence in eastern areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region was a landmark document to be sure. But it was also negotiated and adopted without any women having participated in the negotiations. The technical committees formed to oversee the implementation and the monitoring of the agreement also did not include any women. In March 2013, recognizing the absence of women in the formal process, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region convened consultations with women leaders and civil society groups across the region, seeking to link their community-level effort in building peace to the regional and the national implementation committees. In January 2014, the Great Lakes Women's Plaform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework was launched by the Special Envoy, and it provides grants to women's organizations already working to implement peace in the region. We applaud the dedicated leadership by the United Nations and the countries of the Great Lakes region for recognizing that women were missing from the table and for taking the steps necessary to change that.

A second area where we need to re-aim our focus is in identifying and addressing gender-based violence in a systemic way. The long-term success of peace processes depends upon greater respect for human rights and improved prospects for development. Where gender-based violence is a major feature of conflict or has escalated in the aftermath thereof, it poses a unique challenge to peacebuilding efforts. In other words, it bears repeating that gender equality is a security issue, and thus a strategic imperative for the Council's work. More often than ever before, we are confronted with the unspeakable: the egregious use by violent extremist groups, such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, of gender-based violence, not to mention kidnapping and slavery, which are strategically employed to achieve their aims. The abduction of over 250 Chibok girls from a school in northern Nigeria by Boko Haram militants in April 2014 and that militant group's ongoing use of women and girls as suicide bombers remain tragic reminders of how extremist groups are manipulating gender to achieve their ends.

As the international community responds to violence extremist threats, including across Africa, we must ensure that the needs and the perspectives of women and girls most affected by extremist violence are integrated into our larger approach to countering violent extremism. Our efforts to support survivors of gender-based violence across Africa will be incomplete unless we also commit to fighting impunity. It is for that reason that the United States has supported mobile courts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has led to 1,924 trials and 1,336 convictions of gender-based violence since 2009. United States assistance has also supported the training of 5,505 providers of services to survivors, strengthened 1,103 local organizations serving gender-based violence-affected populations and provided 20,125 gender-based violence survivors with a holistic package of legal services.

The third point that I would like to stress today is that the Security Council's active engagement remains absolutely vital in order to achieve real and tangible gains for women yearning to be included in peace processes, even as we recognize that we still have much work to do. A study on assessing women's inclusion and influence on peace processes by the Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva revealed that when women have been included in peace processes, as in Burundi, Somalia, Darfur and Kenya in recent years, their inclusion was mainly owing to normative pressure applied by women's groups and their international supporters. Our words and resolutions and debates therefore do have an effect on the ground, where it counts the most. Let me give just one small example of where the engagement of the international community has had a strong impact — actually, not such a small example, but an important example. In Sierra Leone a programme sponsored by the United States to strengthen women's local political participation became a strong vehicle for empowing women during the 2014 Ebola outbreak. The women there leveraged their convening authority to host outreach sessions with health-care providers and local populations on the Ebola response. The effort ultimately yielded important recommendations for commmunity-led Ebola responses, standards that were adapted by the Government of Sierra Leone.

Despite the significant progress we have made in advancing the women and peace and security agenda in Africa, again, there is still that remains to be done. As my Secretary of State, John Kerry said, our goal is as simple as it is profound, namely, to empower half the world's population as equal partners in preventing and resolving conflict and building peace in countries threatened and affected by war, violence and insecurity. That is also the commitment that the Council has made, and it is a commitmen that we must all strive even harder to fulfil.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate the Angolan presidency for convening this open debate and for the concept paper (S/2016/219, annex) it has circulated. I would also like to express our gratitude to the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the UN-Women, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations and the Executive Director of the South Sudan Women's Empowerment Network for their respective enlightening briefings and statements.

I wish to start my statement today by highlighting the fact that today this organ of the United Nations is presided over by a women at a time when we are addressing the important issue of the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa. Morever, the focus of this debate could not be more timely at a time when, despite some favourable events, peace and security on the African continent continue to be seriously threatened by the existence of serious conflicts that are devastating various of countries of the region. The African continent has a number of armed conflicts, and that is where the greatest number of peacekeeping operations are deployed. It is also the poorest continent in economic terms, but it is extremely rich in natural resources. Throughout history, Africa has suffered many conflicts and wars between Governments, ethnic groups and rebel groups, and now because of the presence of terrorist organizations that have used violence as a weapon of war in order to control the population through fear.

Men and women continue to suffer without distinction the most serious violations of human rights. However, it is women and children who suffer from that extreme violence in a singular and disproportionate manner. In that context, women are subjected to cruel and inhuman treatment, causing them great suffering. Gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, genital mutilation, forced marriages and pregnancies and child marriage are just some of the situations that girls and women face daily. In that regard, the high level of impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of the worst crimes against humanity is a matter of great concern. I emphasize the importance that Uruguay attaches to the women and peace and security agenda. We continue to play an active role with regard to the rights of women and girls and have, on a number of occasions, reiterated the imperative of women's participation in the prevention and resolution of armed conflicts.

The Council has repeatedly recognized the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding. In numerous resolutions, it has called for increasing their participation and equitable, full and authentic representation in conflict prevention and mediation activities. Since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the international community has made commitments with regard to the women and peace and security agenda and has made significant progress in that regard. Accordingly, resolution 1325 (2000) is of particular importance owing to the fact that, for the first time in history, the specific effects that war has on women were recognized and that the inclusion of women in peace talks ensures that peace will be sustainable over time. Uruguay therefore firmly believes that women must be at the centre of efforts aimed at resolving conflicts.

Similarly, the that resolution recognized the right of women to participate actively in peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflicts, including in the areas of decision-making and peacekeeping missions, and, at the same time, stressed the specific needs involved in the protection of women and girls in armed conflict. The global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), requested by the Secretary-General prior to the high-level review undertaken by the Council on the implementation of the resolution, has demonstrated the favourable influence that women exercise in negotiation processes, thus improving the chances of reaching an agreement.

Uruguay welcomes the information provided in the concept paper (S/2016/219, annex), which details the various mechanisms, policies and structures developed in Africa aimed at creating an environment to enable women to play a more significant role in peace and security. As the concept paper points out, however, several obstacles continue to hinder the full incorporation of those efforts within more formal endeavours to prevent conflicts and achieve more sustainable peace.

The number of women in special political missions on the ground, especially in leadership positions, remains very limited, and the need for the greater participation of women persists, particularly in all mechanisms related to peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction. The primary responsibility for involving women in those processes falls upon the shoulders of the African States themselves. It is at the national level that they must put in place good practices and promote greater participation of women at all levels, because that helps increase operational efficiency and reduce conflicts. Experience on the continent shows us numerous cases of women who have courageously been able to boost recovery in their communities.

Uruguay appreciates the key role of civil society, and especially that of local women's groups that assist victims in various aspects of recovery, from health services to psychological services, social and economic rehabilitation and access to justice. Yet in many cases women remain excluded from the political, social and economic spheres. In other regrettable situations, women are the victims of sexual or gender-based violence, or their fundamental rights are violated. But women must not be seen as victims only, when they are part of the solution, important actors with the potential to influence the resolution of conflicts, agents of change and ultimately peacemakers.

We note with particularly deep concern the violence against specific groups of people and the violation of the rights of women and girls stemming from terrorism and violent extremism in Africa. Armed groups operating within Africa seek the subjugation of women and the suppression of human rights as a method of control and subjugation. For our part, we understand that an effective strategy to combat terrorism and violent extremism must promote participation, leadership and the empowerment of women in order to address the factors that trigger violence by those armed groups.

Uruguay shares the idea that it is moreover necessary for the Organization to appoint more women to high-levels of decision-making, particularly in positions such as those of Permanent Envoys and Special Representatives, mediators and negotiators. Despite the trend of an increased role of women in all processes, including the appointment of women as mediators and envoys, we believe that we are far from reaching the desirable goal.

The participation of women continues to be inadequate in peace negotiations in Africa and in other regions of the world. It is uncontestable that women are the most credible spokespeople for expressing the needs of local communities. They inspire the greatest degree of trust in situations that require the collection of information and testimony from the victims of sexual and gender-based violence. Women have much to say on issues, such as those involving victims, reparations and the conditions needed to ensure that conflict does not reoccur. Women also bring new approaches to negotiations, making constructive contributions to ensure lasting peace. In that regard, they endow the peace process with greater sensitivity with regard to issues that are related to family, education, gender issues and equity, and are called on to play a determining role in verifying and implementing agreements.

Moreover, the contribution of women in the peace talks is essential to building inclusive and peaceful societies based on equality and respect for human rights. Similarly, they play a significant role in post-conflict situations, acting as a key foundation for the social, political and economic reconstruction of local communities. We encourage the participation of African women in national electoral processes. We have seen a number of successes in that regard in Liberia, Malawi and the current leadership of the African Union itself.

Uruguay also believes that the presence of female personnel in peacekeeping operations is necessary. My country has been at the forefront with regard to incorporating women in the armed forces and the national police and within Uruguayan contingents of peacekeeping missions. In doing so, we maintain a percentage above the average for the number of women troops deployed in peacekeeping missions. Currently, 9 per cent of the troops deployed in such missions are made up of women. Always there as volunteers, women have played a prominent role and chalked up high numbers in terms of re-enlistment, which demonstrates their commitment to peace.

Given Uruguay's experience in Africa, including participation in such missions as the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we can testify to the effective role played by the women members of our contingents. In that regard, it has been observed that women's effective participation in peacekeeping operations is of particular importance, as their response differs from that of men. Similarly, women play a key role in confidence-building in local communities, especially among women who have suffered violence. They serve as a model for behaviour for other women and contribute to bringing about an increased sense of security among the people.

Currently, despite the aforementioned efforts, we must acknowledge the existing gaps with respect to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). Women lead only 19 per cent of the United Nations field missions; they account for only 3 per cent of military peacekeeping personnel and 10 per cent of police peacekeeping personnel. As such, Uruguay is concerned about the opportunities and capabilities that are going to waste because greater efforts have not been made to include women in conflict-resolution processes. It has been proven that increasing the percentage of women in the police component of peacekeeping missions has a positive effect on the population, as it reduces the misuse of force or the inappropriate use of weapons and authoritarian behaviour in relations with civilians. Ultimately, the greater participation of women in all aspects of the peace process is indispensable in efforts to establish the foundation for sustainable peace in the African continent.

Another key issue that we would like to highlight is the matter of financing for the appropriate implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. We cannot achieve greater results or positively impact the lives of women and girls if we do not commit to providing the required financial support. In that regard, Uruguay wishes to highlight the commitment that we must undertake to earmarking greater funding for empowerment and gender-equality programmes.

Finally, we note last year's adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1). We welcome the inclusion of its Goal 5 on gender equality, which we believe to be essential in the light of existing gender inequality, in particular in Africa. We believe that the issue of gender equality does not exclusively concern women; rather it is a struggle that affects us all, men and women. In that context, Uruguay supports the full implementation of Goal 5 in order to put an end to all forms of discrimination against women and girls, and ensure the full and effective participation of women, with equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making.

In conclusion, I would like to pay tribute and convey our appreciation to all those women who work every day — often at the risk of their lives — to promote peace and security in Africa and all over the globe.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes Angola's initiative to convene this debate. China expresses its appreciation to you, Minister Delgado, for presiding over this meeting. I also wish to thank Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka, Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun, Ambassador Kamau and Ambassador António for their briefings. China also listened attentively to the statement made by the representative of the South Sudan Women's Empowerment Network.

The current international security situation is complex and challenging. In particular, regions like Africa and the Middle East have long been mired in war and conflict. Many women are victims of violence and the threat of terror. On the other hand, women are increasingly important players in the prevention and resolution of regional conflicts. The international community should step up protection of the rights and interests of women in conflict and give women a greater role in conflict prevention and resolution.

First, we should enhance protection for women in conflict, it is incumbent upon the international community to adopt effective measures to maximize security assurances for women affected by conflict. In providing humanitarian assistance to conflict areas, we should focus in particular on the needs of women and other vulnerable groups. The provisions of relevant Council resolutions on the protection of women in conflict must be implemented to the letter. United Nations peacekeeping operations should, within the purview of their respective mandates, assist host countries in safeguarding the security of women in conflict and should effectively implement a zero-tolerance policy toward sexual violence.

Secondly, greater efforts should be deployed to find political solutions to critical regional issues, and greater importance attached to the role of women in conflict resolution. The international community should work hard to help design political solutions to conflicts and overcome differences through dialogue. Women should be encouraged to become important players in mediation and to fully leverage their advantages in advocating a culture of peace. United Nations peacekeeping operations may also steadily raise the percentage of female staff so that communication with local women and girls can be improved.

Thirdly, women should be given a greater role to play in building a culture of harmony and inclusiveness. The international community should encourage women to play a greater role in social life, and it should educate young people so that they can resist the ideological influence of violent extremism and the demagogic rhetoric of armed groups and terrorists. Women should be empowered to fully participate in all phases of post-conflict reconstruction, actively encourage the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process of combatants, and provide counselling and community support for victims of violence.

Fourthly, women must be enabled to promote economic and social development, thereby eliminating the roots causes of conflict. The international community should step up economic empowerment efforts for African women, help African countries reduce poverty and promote economic development. African women should be provided with better occupational-skills training and with greater funding support for entrepreneurship in order to comprehensively improve incomes and livelihoods, with a view to promoting the industrialization and agricultural modernization of the continent, thereby eradicating the root causes of conflict.

Last September, the Global Summit of Women was convened under a joint China-United Nations initiative. The Summit was attended by Chinese President Xi Jinping and representatives from over 140 countries, including 85 Heads of State and Government. The event had a significant and far-reaching impact on the development of the global women's cause. China decided to contribute $10 million to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. Over the next five years, China will adopt a series of initiatives to help developing countries overcome the difficulties facing women and girls with regard to their access to medical care and education, strengthen training for local women and, through a fund created in partnership with the United Nations, roll out projects dedicated to capacity-building for womin developing countries.

China attaches great importance to working with Africa, promoting the cause of women and intensifying support for African women in the political, economic, cultural, educational and health domains. The 2015

Johannesburg Action Plan of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation called for intensified pragmatic cooperation between China and Africa in the area of women's affairs and for dialogue between female leaders. The assistance provided by China in recent years covers almost all African countries. China also provided women and girls in Ebola-afflicted West African countries, such as Sierra Leone and Liberia, with a large amount of assistance in kind to support Africa's efforts to upgrade its public-health system and emergency-response capacity on all fronts.

Going forward, China will implement 200 Happy Life projects across Africa and 100 village-level agricultural development projects, build industrial parks and vocational training centres on a collaborative basis, and provide training for 200,000 technical specialists. These cooperative projects will benefit the people of Africa, and in particular bring new opportunities and new hope for the development of African women, thereby creating new conditions for conflict resolution.

China stands ready to continue working with the international community to jointly help women achieve comprehensive development and fully engage in political, economic and social life so that they can contribute more positive energy to the peace, development and prosperity of the African continent and makes their own important contributions.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): Ukraine appreciates Angola's initiative to hold this open debate. At the outset, I would like to state that Ukraine aligns itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union on this subject.

I would like to thank all the briefers, whose presence today proves the importance of the topic chosen by the Angolan presidency.

Conflicts and crises in Africa have taken a more complex turn in recent years. They tend to be followed by devastating upsurges of violence against women and girls. We all recall with deep shock the tragic case of the abduction of 200 Chibok girls from a school in northern Nigeria by Boko Haram militants in April 2014. In too many places, women and girls are being wounded, mutilated and killed along with men and boys. They also suffer gender-based violence. Sexual violence is used as a weapon of war in conflicts all around the continent.

Ukraine condemns all acts of sexual violence, as well as any form of sexual abuse of women and children, which, in some conflict situations, surpass the level of war crimes and reach the scale of crimes against humanity or genocidal slaughter. Considering the growing magnitude of such crimes, we express our readiness and commitment to actively contributing to consolidated international efforts aimed at elaborating effective steps to address the issue of sexual violence. In this context, we welcome the decision of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the case of former Congolese Vice-President Jean-Pierre Bemba — the first trial of the ICC to focus on sexual violence as a weapon of war. As a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Ukraine strongly supports the Council's efforts aimed at addressing the full range of human rights violations and abuses faced by women in armed conflict and post-conflict situations.

In the face of the challenges of war and conflicts, women are increasingly becoming critical agents of change. According to the global study, there is growing evidence that women's empowerment contributes to the success of peace talks and the achievement of sustainable peace, accelerates economic recovery, strengthens our peace operations, improves our humanitarian assistance, and can help counter violent extremism. Ukraine recognizes the importance of the equal and full participation of women in all activities for the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peacebuilding and peacekeeping. It is also in this light that we welcome the joint initiative of Spain and the United Kingdom to set up the Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security.

Yet, while gender issues are increasingly integrated into United Nations activities, the challenges in this area remain grave and widespread around the globe. Nowhere is that more evident than in Africa. Women there play important roles as custodians of culture and nurturers of families, yet in times of conflict they are hardly represented at peace negotiating tables or in community reconstruction efforts. Moreover, according to UN-Women, women constitute fewer than 10 per cent of peace negotiators globally, and only 3 per cent of signatories to peace agreements.

We commend the fact that a number of African countries have embraced resolution 1325 (2000) and already have relevant national action plans in place. We take equally positive note of the fact that the African Union has also made significant efforts to integrate the women, peace and security agenda into its own security, crisis-response, human rights and peacebuilding efforts. It is of great importance that both the African Union and the United Nations have increased the number of female military and police officers in peacekeeping missions and set up units that provide protection to victims of gender-based violence in Somalia and Darfur. In Rwanda, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other places, the United Nations provides important support to survivors of such violence.

Noting the ever changing global context of peace and security — in particular as related to the surge of terrorism and violent extremism and the increasing numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons — today we need more than ever to ensure the participation of women in developing strategies to prevent and respond to these challenges. That trend was clearly demonstrated during the recent visit of the Security Council delegation to Mali, where we had a very useful meeting with a number of local women's organizations.

In closing, let me stress that, having been involved with resolution 1325 (2000) from its origins, Ukraine is a strong supporter of the Security Council's women, peace and security agenda. Recently, we adopted a national action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), developed in close consultations with agencies of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as civil society. The action plan is aimed at promoting women's greater participation in military, political, economic and social life, peace and recovery processes, the prevention of and combating gender-based violence, and the reintegration of persons affected by the consequences of the ongoing foreign aggression against my own country. Ukraine will remain actively engaged in promoting women's rights, women's participation in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction, and their protection from sexual and gender-based violence.

Mrs. Schwalger (New Zealand): I should like to take this opportunity to thank Angola for organizing this important debate, and Minister Delgado for presiding over it. We also thank the briefers for their insights.

We have made significant progress in the 15 years since the Security Council adopted its landmark resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. The fundamental importance of addressing the impact of conflict on women and girls is now widely acknowledged. We have agreed frameworks in place. However, practical implementation lags behind, particularly with women's participation in conflict prevention and resolution processes. Meaningful participation is the exception rather than the rule. That was evident at last week's open debate on conflict prevention in the Great Lakes region (see S/PV.7653). Empirical evidence confirms that the meaningful participation of women during all stages of conflict resolution contributes strongly to preventing escalation and sustaining peace.

Including women works. Failure to include women in peace processes perpetuates inequality. It makes breaking the cycle of conflict more difficult. We know this, and yet we continue to hear arguments that women's participation is peripheral rather than essential. We hear cultural justifications for the exclusion of women from the negotiating table or mediation roles, and we are asked to delay women's involvement until the reconciliation phase, often after an agreement has been reached. These outdated attitudes and approaches must be challenged.

Highlighting examples of how women have made a difference in preventing and resolving conflict in Africa demonstrates the practical benefits of women's participation. Take, for example, the role that women's groups continue to play in de-escalating and preventing election-related violence. The establishment of women's situation rooms and the deployment of trained female election monitors in Senegal, Kenya, Nigeria and, most recently, in the Central African Republic have had a measurable impact on preventing, monitoring and mitigating incidents of violence and intimidation.

Women's groups also play a key role in de-escalating crises and advocating for an end to conflict. The critical role played by the movement Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace in ending the conflict in that country is well documented. Women have also mobilized to support peace in Burundi by bringing parties together to engage in dialogue. A nationwide network of women mediators, established by the United Nations in close partnership with the Ministry of the Interior and civil society organizations, has effectively prevented violence at the local level, dispelled false rumours and mitigated the impact of the ongoing political crisis on everyday people. As the mediation process in Burundi moves forward, those gains must not be side-lined or suppressed. The efforts of those women, undertaken with minimal resources and at personal risk, deserve more than our applause; they deserve support and empowerment, because what they do works. We have taken particular note of the steps called for by Ms. Paleki Ayang to end sexual violence in South Sudan as a necessary ingredient to rebuilding peace in her country.

We must facilitate the active contribution of women in peace operations in Africa. We must ensure that United Nations operations are appropriately prepared and equipped to address the needs of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict settings. New Zealand lies far from the African continent, however we strive to make a modest, practical contribution to those efforts. New Zealand has long reflected women and peace and security considerations in its doctrine, policy and training for uniformed personnel serving internationally. Last November, an all-female New Zealand Defence Force team provided training on the the theme "Operationalization of gender" at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre in Ghana. The training incorporated conflict-prevention techniques through the inclusion of women, increasing the employment of women in conflict prevention and resolution processes, and women's experiences of leadership in conflict.

Our experience in gender-sensitive approaches to community policing in post-conflict settings has proved the value of women's participation. Female police officers interact better with the local female population. The presence of female personnel empowers local women, thereby ensuring that they are not seen only as victims but as actors and providers of safety and security.

Regional leadership has played an important role in African efforts to support the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution. We commend the African Union's Gender, Peace and Security Programme. It has framed the integration and strengthening of the African peace and security architecture's responsiveness to gender issues.

Finally, we urge the Security Council to incorporate the perspectives of women in its work as a matter of course. We should encourage greater participation by women in all mediation efforts and conflict-prevention processes. It is simple: when women are included as active participants, there is a far greater chance of ending conflict and sustaining peace.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): On behalf of the Malaysian delegation, I join previous speakers in welcoming you to the Security Council, Madam President. I wish to thank you and the Angolan presidency for convening today's open debate focused on the role of women in conflict resolution and prevention in Africa. Allow me also to express my appreciation to the briefers, namely, Under-Secretary-General Mlambo-Ngcuka, Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun and Ambassador Kamau, as well as Ambassador António, for their contributions to this discusion. I also pay tribute to Ms. Paleki Ayang, whose insights and personal experience in the conflict situation in South Sudan lends greater persuasion and legitimacy to the role of women.

Malaysia associates itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Iran on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

This open debate is timely and important follow-up to the high-level review of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, which took place in October of last year. On that occasion, Malaysia joined members of the Security Council, States Members of the United Nations and the Organizaiton in reaffirming the importance of this agenda, as well as of renewing our commitment to strengthening the role of women in establishing and preserving peace and security with greater inclusivity.

The important role and potential contribution of women to conflict resolution and prevention can no longer be sidelined or ignored. The situation in Africa requires a wider aperture for us to assess what strategies have worked and what challenges need to be overcome to ensure that women are allowed to fulfil their potential as agents of peace and security. In that connection, the October 2015 global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) provides a rich empirical resource for us to drawn upon on the value of women's contributions to peace and security. We would like to highlight three areas in which we believe that the involvement of women would greatly enhance conflict-prevention and resolution efforts, namely, political participation, early-warning mechanisms and building long-term resilience against conflict.

Malaysia believes that increasing meaningful political participation by women is crucial to ending current conflicts and preventing future ones. The Security Council has consistently emphasized that achieving sustainable resolutions to armed conflicts cannot be achieved through military means, but only through peaceful political processes. However, such processes have almost always been led exclusively by men — women and their voices have for far too long been excluded. Malaysia fully supports efforts to increase the participation of women in political processes, including placing women in decision-making positions that can influence negotiation outcomes. Apart from the necessary training and capacity-building to sharpen women's political leadership, that also requires political will on the part of negotiating parties, mediators and organizers of peace processes to actively include women at all stages of negotiations. In addition, providing avenues for women's civil society organizations to contribute to, and monitor the implementation of, peace processes will also help ensure that women's perspectives are reflected.

An important element of conflict prevention is the ability to detect early warning signs and to act upon them. In conflict situations, there is ample evidence of women being able to provide insights into changing dynamics, especially at the community and grass-roots levels. We must encourage actors on the ground to tap into such insights. Strong early-warning mechanisms that take into account gender-sensitive indicators and allow for the confidential channelling of information would greatly aid conflict-prevention efforts. In that regard, we welcome initiatives such as the setting up of women's situations rooms to monitor, prevent and mitigate electoral-related violence, which warrant continued support.

The long-term consolidation of peace and security requires addressing the root causes of conflict and placing women at the heart of peacebuilding efforts. In our view, establishing national legal frameworks that uphold gender equality and protect the rights of women stands the best chance of staving off a relapse into conflict. At the same time, socio-economic recovery strategies that provide livelihoods and educational opportunities for women and girls will go a long way towards building community resilience.

More broadly, we believe that peacebuilding activities should also emphasize women's empowerment so that they can become key contributors in the political, economic and social spheres. In that regard, we welcome the Peacebuilding Commission's initiative in developing a gender strategy to strengthen its engagement in and support for gender equality in peacebuilding activities. As a current member of the Commission, Malaysia is committed to engaging proactively in developing the strategy and looks forward to its adoption as soon as June.

Efforts to build inclusive and resilient communities are especially crucial as the whole world, including Africa, continues to grapple with the rising threat of violent extremism. Boko Haram is a continuing menace in the region, terrorizing civilian populations across national borders, including by targeting women and girls. At the same time, we condemn the unacceptable exploitation of women and children as suicide bombers. We underscore the importance of ensuring that measures aimed at countering violent extremism take into account the protection of vulnerable groups that have been coerced or manipulated.

The full realization of the potential of women for conflict prevention and resolution requires the cooperation of the entire international community, including Member States, regional organizations, the United Nations and civil society. A comprehensive and coherent approach, led by the United Nations, that promotes the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution efforts, is key to the effective implementation of this agenda. In that context, Malaysia supports and is encouraged by the various measures initiated by the Secretary-General and the United Nations system to promote greater representation of women in the senior leadership, mediating teams and peacekeeping missions of the United Nations, as well as better coordination among United Nations entities in mainstreaming the issue of women and peace and security.

We also support a more in-depth consideration of women's perspectives throughout the work of the Security Council, including through the Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security set up under resolution 2242 (2015). Furthermore, we see benefits in regular consultations between the Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), and between the United Nations and AU counterparts on women and peace and security, aimed at strengthening cooperation on our shared goals of the protection and empowerment of women in order to promote and security.

I would like to conclude by emphasizing that we will all come closer to achieving our shared goal of a more peaceful and stable world when we encourage women to play their rightful role in peace and security efforts. Malaysia remains fully committed to doing its part to realize that mission.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Madam President, the Senegalese delegation is pleased to see you presiding in person over today's Security Council open debate on the role of women in preventing and resolving conflicts in Africa, an extremely important subject that continues to be a priority for the Council in its primary mission, the prevention and resolution of conflicts. The variety and depth of the briefings we have heard this morning is testament to the topic's relevance, and I would like to thank all the briefers for the practical light they have shed on our discussions: the Executive Director of UN-Women; Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs; Ambassador Macharia Kamau, Permanent Representative of Kenya and Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission; Ambassador Tété Antonio, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; and Ms. Paleki Ayang, Executive Director of the South Sudan Women's Empowerment Network.

Senegal associates itself with the statement to be delivered later on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Senegal believes firmly that if the maintenance of international peace and security is to be effective, we cannot ignore the contribution of half the world's population — namely, women — particularly since it is they who are the principal victims of every kind of violence, including sexual and sexist violence. This often forces them to flee their homes or countries — as Ms. Ayang has just witnessed — when they are not simply being used as a way to modify an ethnic component.

Fifteen years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), and in the spirit of resolution 2171 (2014), today's debate gives us an opportunity to go even further in taking a comprehensive approach to preventing conflict and maintaining peace through the integration of human rights, particularly women's rights, with gender equality. By doing so, the Council can make a better contribution to the establishment of inclusive peace processes that take into consideration women's equal, full and meaningful participation, as well as their improved representation in prevention and mediation efforts, in accordance with resolution 1325 (2000) and its successors.

Africa, the continent most affected by conflicts, has a major role to play in that dynamic. We have established several political and institutional mechanisms, including, on women's rights, the Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, which commits African Union member States to promoting women's full participation and representation in peace processes. The appointment by the President of the African Union Commission of a Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security is part of that same effort. In West Africa, through their adoption of the Dakar Declaration on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2015), the countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) aim to strengthen the role of women, particularly in mediation, the promotion of a culture of peace and in the creation of early warning systems.

It is in that spirit that Senegal has been recruiting women into its security and armed forces since 2007, after becoming the first African country to achieve full parity in all national and local elective offices. The gender-based sectoral strategy adopted by our defence and security forces will, we hope, enable us to institutionalize gender balance in our armed forces' interventions, with more and more women already participating in our peacekeeping missions. Such provisions help to strengthen the role of African women in preventing and resolving conflicts, combating violence and working for development through innovative mechanisms aimed at achieving more peaceful societies.

However, many problems remain. A review of the overall security situation in West Africa, for instance, brings up new challenges that efforts to prevent and resolve conflict must take into more systematic and systemic consideration. We must therefore increase our investment in early warning systems and national rapid-response mechanisms if we are to ensure the full participation of women and civil-society organizations in peace processes. That is particularly important for strategies aimed at preventing radicalization and violent extremism and, consequently, terrorism. It will also be necessary in parallel to ramp up the promotion of education and a culture of peace in all Member States and increase awareness of the content of resolution 1325 (2000), including by translating it into the main languages of the African continent. Furthermore, the mobilization of substantial resources is vital to the success of national plans aimed at ensuring the implementation of the resolution, so as to strengthen the means available to them to fight terrorism. Along those same lines, annual national budgets should provide for activities as part of national action plans, which would strengthen the political commitment of States to the resolution.

Globally speaking, efforts aimed at ensuring the effective participation of women in the settlement of conflicts must be deployed in synergetic action among the Security Council and the other members of the United Nations, including the various entities that are active on the ground. To that end, the new Informal Expert Group of the Security Council on women and peace and security created by resolution 2242 (2015), as well as the Ad hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, must work in perfect coordination so as to contribute to a better assessment of lessons learned and an effective sharing of best practices in terms of the incorporation of the women and peace and security aspect into conflict-prevention policies in Africa.

By way of conclusion, the Senegalese delegation would like to suggest that the various relevant proposals shared by the briefers and delegations this morning be collected and assessed and, to the extent possible, implemented. Senegal sees in this a key contribution to the achievement of peaceful and inclusive societies, as provided for in one of the 17 Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Venezuela.

Mr. Suarez Borges (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to welcome the presence of the Angolan Minister for Family and the Promotion of Women, Ms. Maria Filomena Delgado, and to thank the presidency for its initiative of convening this important debate and for preparing the concept paper (S/2016/219, annex). We would like also to express our gratitude to Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka; Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun; Ambassadors Macharia Kamau and Téte António; and Ms. Paleki Ayang for their briefings.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela associates itself with the statement to be made by the representative of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

In the three global studies carried out last year on the review of the peacebuilding architecture, the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and peacekeeping operations, there is reference to the fact that priority should be attached to the prevention of conflicts. The Global Study on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) states:

> "Conflict prevention and resolution, as practiced today, continues to focus on neutralizing potential spoilers and perpetrators of violence, rather than investing in resources for peace".

The study added that it was key to take into account the fact that militarism sustains and perpetuates structural inequalities, which disenfranchise women and girls from public goods and entrench exclusion and marginalization, which exacerbate inequality.

Venezuela fully agrees with what was said earlier. That is why we stress the fact that prevention and the peaceful resolution of disputes is always the best and most appropriate mechanism for averting the harmful and devastating effects of armed conflict on the civilian population, especially on women, girls and boys. For that reason, we are convinced of the need to redouble our efforts and muster the necessary will to find political solutions to situations that would make it possible to create an environment conducive to the empowerment and development of women, with special emphasis on promoting national capacities and increasing assistance, with a view to helping the countries affected to overcome the difficulties and underlying causes that lead to armed conflict, including exclusion, poverty, social inequity and lack of access to basic resources and services.

It is important to highlight here the fact that women, including girls, suffer in a disproportionate manner from the harmful consequences of war owing to the violence perpetrated against them by various armed groups, which is reflected in the very painful statistics on victims. Women and girls represent half of the population affected, and therefore all efforts made to prevent their exposure to harm will be an investment in a more humane future.

Thus peace processes provide us with an ideal scenario for putting an end to violence and to the root causes of conflict. Including women therefore represents a strategic opportunity to address comprehensively and from a gender-based perspective the shifts that will that lead to lasting peace, development, justice and social equality.

Since resolution 1325 (2000) was adopted 15 years ago, and following subsequent resolutions on the issue of women and peace and security, significant progress has been made in the normative area, in the United Nations, regional organizations and Member States. Notwithstanding this, there remain major challenges before us, among which I would highlight the fact that women in situations of armed conflict continue to suffer in a repeated and systematic manner from sexual violence used as a tactic of war and continue to be underrepresented in the prevention and resolution of conflicts.

In this context, we condemn the violence unleashed by terrorist groups, which impacts with unusual cruelty the Middle East and Africa. The main victims of this violence are women, boys and girls, as those groups use sexual exploitation and abuse as a strategy for their criminal action, in clear violation of international humanitarian law and human rights law. In this context, it is vital to fully respect, in keeping with international law, the ban on third parties supplying weapons and financial support to those groups. In this way it will be possible to limit their operational capacity, thereby reducing the harmful and irreparable consequences of armed conflict on civilians, especially on women, girls and boys.

The optimization of efforts geared to the effective implementation of resolutions related to the issue of women and peace and security requires effective coordination among all States concerned; the various United Nations bodies with competence in the area, in keeping with their respective mandates; and with the various regional and subregional mechanisms that deal with this issue. These efforts and initiatives must take into account how women can participate in each of the different national contexts and consider the prevailing political models as well as the social, cultural and religious structures of each society, so as to respond in the most appropriate manner to each of these specific contexts. All of these actions must be based on respect for national sovereignty.

A number of studies have shown that in the area of peace and security, the percentage of aid earmarked for promoting gender equality and equity is well below what would be necessary in order to fulfil the commitments made in this area. That is why it is very important to provide sufficient resources for the empowerment and training of women and for the preparation and implementation of national action plans on women and peace and security. Moreover, it is imperative to provide support for promoting the participation of women in local initiatives for peacebuilding, addressing not just their technical capacities and ability to have an impact, but also their basic needs and security. In that context, we urge political missions and peacekeeping operations to continue to promote the participation of gender advisers on the protection of women in the various missions carried out by the United Nations, which should recognize gender mainstreaming as a key part of their responsibilities. Moreover, it should also be borne in mind that the implementation of this policy will have positive and practical impacts in the progress on overcoming the various obstacles that women face in peacebuilding and conflict-prevention activities, as well as in the oversight of peace agreements.

We wish to conclude by affirming that, for Venezuela, women play a leading role and are an essential driving force in the struggle for the emancipation of our peoples. To that end, we wish to reiterate that, at the global level, women are called upon to assume positions with equal opportunities and in conditions leading development and peacebuilding processes that are inclusive, equitable and transforming. In that historic and crucial process, Venezuela reiterates its commitment to continue to work resolutely towards achieving these goals.

Mr. Okamura (Japan): I would like to begin by expressing my sincere gratitude for Angola's initiative in organizing this open debate on this very important issue. I also appreciate the informative briefings delivered by previous speakers.

I lived in Africa for three years, and I was able to observe at first-hand that the mobilization of the power of women was the key to addressing challenges in Africa. In my statement, I would like to share my experience about the power of women and the important roles that African women are playing, and then to refer to Japan's efforts in unleashing the power of African women in preventing and resolving conflicts. I am talking about the power of women. What exactly is the power of women in Africa?

First, women are managers. Japanese Embassies finance many grass-roots projects and, as an ambassador, I have found that the most successful and best implemented projects have always been those proposed by women. It is women who are managers in daily lives. Many women engage in household management. Rearing children requires supervising. Cooking requires planning. Shopping requires calculation. If there is money, women use it for education and health care, instead of wasting it. Therefore, women are managers.

Secondly, women are entrepreneurs. Japan once provided financial support for a school canteen project in a village in Côte d'Ivoire. The idea was to support mothers who would cultivate a plot of land to produce rice and corn for their children's school lunches. Several years later, I made a visit to that village. The project was successfully realized. A school lunch was now assured, and more children were attending school than before. To my surprise, I also found a big chicken cage beside the rice and corn field. I asked if the chickens inside were also for lunch. But the answer was no. The mothers became aware of their powers of production, and they decided to start a chicken farm to earn more money. The chickens sold quite well at the local market, which allowed the mothers to buy pencils and notebooks for their children. Therefore, women are entrepreneurs.

Lastly, women are brave. They stand up for peace. I am very much impressed by the story of Ms. Paleki Ayang in South Sudan, where women of both the Nuer and Dinka tribes get together to bridge the antagonism of the men. But I had the same experience in Côte d'Ivoire. On the eve of the Côte d'Ivoire crisis in 2011, everyone could feel the looming tension. Demonstrations of any kind might lead to a terrible crackdown. Then one day, the women of Abidjan started marching in the streets, banging their pans with kitchen utensils, shouting "no!" to violence. They demonstrated their courage by demanding peace in spite of the danger. To my surprise, the security forces did not touch the women who were demonstrating. They did not shoot at each other, because in Africa, I understand, attacking women might be seen as an act of dishonour.

My point is that, when it comes to the role of women in Africa, we talk about empowering and protecting women. Yes, that is true. But it is not merely a matter of empowering or protecting women; it is a matter of mobilizing the power of women. It must be acknowledged that African women themselves have great potential, and they are active players who contribute to peace and stability. Furthermore, when it comes to peace and stability, we should think of how to best mobilize women's power.

Japan places great importance on the women and peace and security agenda in Africa, and so we will continue to cooperate in protecting the rights and interests of women and girls during armed conflict. That involves focusing our efforts to make the best use of, which means to mobilize, the power of women, particularly concerning the following aspects.

First, Japan underpins African efforts to establish national action plans on women and peace and security. Projects in Somalia and with the League of Arab States are now taking place through our financial assistance.

Secondly, as a member of the Security Council, Japan wishes to contribute to the work of the informal expert group on women and peace and security. We are pleased to see that the group made effective inputs before the Council's visit to Mali earlier this month. Also, as an active member of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), we welcome its efforts, led by Ambassador Macharia Kamau, to introduce the PBC gender strategy aligned with women and peace and security efforts.

Last but not least, this year we will make a contribution of $14 million to UN-Women, as well as to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. The contribution is being made with the aim to mobilize the inherent power of African women.

In conclusion, I would like to say once again that Japan has traditionally stressed the great importance of its relationship with Africa through the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) process. TICAD will be held in Kenya this year, for the first time on the African continent. The role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts is one of the key elements to be discussed at this year's session. Japan wishes to build up its cooperation with the international community to that end.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): Through you, Madam President, France would like warmly to thank the delegation of Angola for organizing this open debate, which allows the Security Council, in the context of its work on the prevention and resolution of conflicts, to continue to add value to and to promote the crucial role of women on these issues. I also thank all the briefers for their precise and enlightening briefings on the evolution of the role of women and, I would even say, the real and potential power they possess in terms of settling conflict in Africa.

I heard the statistics and the information presented by the Executive Director of UN-Women, and the message is clear: women's involvement in these issues is crucial for achieving lasting peace. The growing recognition of this fact is an important trend for the Organization, a deep-rooted movement in whose favour France is firmly committed. Our efforts should therefore focus on the ways in which to concretely implement that principle. What tools not only to strengthen but also ensure active participation by women in the prevention and settlement of conflicts? How can we ensure that all Council resolutions — from 1325 (2000) to 2242 (2015) — are fully and effectively implemented? I will try to answer those questions by stressing three points today.

First, the decision-making power of women in peace processes must be enhanced by facilitating the participation of civil society. I remind everyone in the Chamber today that civil society is an indispensable force essential to any democratic process, and therefore to every post-conflict stabilization process. It is a simple equation: without civil society there is no inclusivity and, without that, there can be no lasting peace. It is therefore necessary that Governments open the doors to organizations representing women, if they want to lay the foundation for sustainable development. We are convinced that in our fight against climate change, women will play a decisive role.

During the Council's visit to Mali, we noted the wealth and dynamism of Malian civil society. Let us heed it, because it has something to say about the peace process under way. Its expertise and analysis can serve as a valuable guide to the implementation of the second national action plan for women and peace and security in Mali, which aims to involve women in the peace process. The support provided by UN-Women and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali is essential.

On a regional level, France also encourages the African Union to continue its efforts to give more space to women through its Gender, Peace and Security Programme, which the African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security Ms. Bineta Diop, spoke about compellingly. France also calls for the full participation of women in all ongoing and future peace processes and dialogues in Africa. What goes for Mali also applies to Burundi, the Great Lakes region and the Sahel region. It is a real priority.

Finally, at the national level, France is working closely with civil society. During the sixtieth session of Commission on the Status of Women, which came to an end a few days ago, Ms. Laurence Rossignol, France's Minister for Families, Children and Women's Rights, incorporated into her delegation nearly 20 organizations representing women. In France, civil society is an integral part of women's rights diplomacy.

Secondly, the role of women in the prevention and settlement of conflicts should be increased as part of our strategies against violent extremism and terrorism. The African continent was tragically and repeatedly struck by the recent attacks in Mali, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso, as well as by the constant deadly attacks of Boko Haram in Nigeria and Al-Shabaab in Somalia in particular. We know women are victims of intolerable violence on a daily basis that is an affront to the human conscience. Terrorist groups target them, exploit them, reduce them to sexual objects and sell them in public squares or online. Women are objects of a parallel economy, victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation purposes and the trafficking in them finances the activities of terrorist groups. That is the very condition of women and their rights, which are denied. Above all, we must give women the means to reverse that logic of control, so they can make decisions about their bodies, their lives and the society in which they live. To do that, women must have access, including in conflict situations in Africa, to sexual and reproductive rights and health services, to education and economic resources.

Women are not just victims of terrorist groups; they have multiple roles to play. I am convinced that the women and peace and security agenda must be fully integrated into counter-terrorism strategies. The fight against terrorism and violent extremism is a common undertaking and, to be effective, no stakeholder should be neglected. Women are an integral part of the fight against terrorism and it is essential to provide them with the necessary means to play their parts.

Finally, and thirdly, we must redouble our efforts to reintegrate women associated with armed groups. Women who have suffered the violence of conflict are often marked by a considerable post-conflict stress: they bear the stigma of sexual violence. We must ensure that they are able to return to their societies and their communities of origin. That return is often violent. Husbands, families and the labour market all reject them. Therefore, it is crucial that women who are liberated from those armed groups should enjoy — just like men or soldiers — disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes. Similarly, it is necessary for security sector reform (SSR) programmes implemented in post-crisis situations to take into account women and gender issues. Without that proper rehabilitation, women will remain marginalized and represent a gap in the rebuilding of societies. It is time for DDR and SSR to become more female-oriented. That is why France, within the framework of its national women and peace and security programme, covering the period 2015-2018, has contributed to several programs in Africa, devoted to, among other things, social cohesion, education, access to justice for women in post-conflict situations on the continent.

The future of Africa is in the hands of its people, especially its women. Today they continue to be victims of the conflicts ravaging the continent, and it is therefore up to the United Nations to give them the tools to serve as stakeholders in the peace of tomorrow. The Council can count on the full support of France to assist women in post-conflict situations in Africa.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Our delegation would like to start by expressing its gratitude to the Angolan presidency for its initiative in convening today's meeting on the topic of the role of women in preventing and settling conflicts in Africa. We would also like to convey our gratitude to all the invited briefers for their participation in the meeting and their comprehensive contribution to the debate.

One of the most important preconditions for the stability, sustainable development of African countries and security and well-being of the population, including women, isthe prevention and settlement of conflicts. Despite the overall decline over the past decade, the African continent remains highly vulnerable to crises. Therefore, a timely and effective response by the international community to emerging threats and security challenges in Africa is essential. In that regard, we view as unacceptable attempts to dictate to African Governments settlement recipes without their consent or request. We welcome the increased activity by Africans themselves with regard to emergency response, as well as the growing participation by African women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts. We note the progress made in forging an African peace and security architecture with the assistance of the international community.

The Russian Federation is carrying out a consistent policy of developing cooperation among the United Nations, the African Union and subregional organizations. We call for further pooling of efforts regarding the conflict situations in Darfur, Somalia, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Guinea-Bissau, as well as the intra-Sudanese track, in the fight against international terrorism, transnational organized crime, piracy, the illegal trafficking in arms and drugs, as well as other important areas of cooperation, including the issue of women and peace and security. Russia is ready to step up its cooperation with African States aimed at strengthening their crisis-response capacities, including through the ongoing training of their peacekeepers and law-enforcement agents in Russian educational establishments. Our country is participating in a number of United Nations peacekeeping operations on the continent and plays a leading role among the contributors of air-transport services to them.

The issue of women and peace and security is an inalienable component of peace and conflict-resolution processes and post-conflict peacebuilding. The participation of women in such efforts has much positive potential. We must also note the efforts of specialized subregional and regional organizations in that regard. A good example of cooperation is the African Union's five-year Gender, Peace and Security Programme for the period 2015-2020. In order to achieve results in implementing the agenda on women and peace and security, there needs to be a balanced, system-wide approach that provides for the full-fledged participation of women in peace processes throughout the continent and in post-conflict reconstruction. No less pressing is the need to ensure the effectiveness of efforts to deal with violence against women during armed conflicts in Africa. There is also a need to ensure that the inclusion of gender aspects in our work on the ground does not become an end in itself and is not only declarative in nature. We should aim at achieving real results. In that context, it is important to bear in mind that national plans of action for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) cannot be used as an instrument for assessing the policy of States in terms of their gender-promotion policies. We need to bear in mind that the protection of women during the course of armed conflicts and steps to afford them equal opportunities for participation in efforts to achieve peace and security are the primary responsibility of the States involved in such conflicts. The international community and the United Nations must provide them assistance in that regard. One of the main objectives of peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts should be the restoration of normal life and the elimination of the consequences of conflicts, as well as safeguarding the security of all strata and groups of the population.

As we have noted earlier, greater effectivness of the work of the Security Council is not always achieved through the establishment of new structures. That is the reason for our doubts with regard to the usefulness of setting up the Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security. We stand ready to cooperate with other members of the Council on this very important topic in order to develop effective and tried methods.

The women of African States can make a substantive and unique contribution to achieving the objective of preventing and resolving conflicts on the African continent through the joint efforts of all interested parties, as there is a need to create the optimal conditions for achieving that goal, while not forgetting the central task of protecting African women and their safety and security. The main guidelines in that regard remain the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000).

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Madam Minister, for organizing this debate and, above all, for presiding over our discussion.

Fifteen years ago or more, when the agenda item on women and peace and security reached the Security Council, the main purpose was to improve prevention mechanisms in the Security Council and civil society, which were, at the time and even now, considered, and rightly so, to be about preventing the outbreak of conflicts and not simply about ensuring that women and children were dealt with in an adequate manner. Fifteen years later, the work of the Security Council is focused mainly on military aspects, but that is not why, in my view, we can say that we have come a long way. Over the years, we have made much progress in developing a comprehensive, integrated agenda on woman and peace and security. A significant indicator of the fact that we are on the right path with that comprehensive focus is the selection by the presidency of Angola of the participants in today's debate. I am particularly pleased to see the Peacebuilding Commission represented. I am also very pleased to see the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the African Union represented here as well, and especially our dear friend Paleki Ayang, who gave us a brilliant and moving presentation.

In any event, I will never tire of repeating that the best way to prevent the outbreak of conflict is to ensure the appropriate participation of women. When women do not participate sufficiently in peacebuilding processes, imperfect peace results, peace that is vulnerable and, above all, an unfair peace, in which a part of the population imposes its way of seeing things on the other part of the population that did not participate in the peacebuilding process. It need not always be that way, however, and I wish to highlight the fact that there are very good initiatives that are working. I will mention three. First, the regional platform for women in the Sahel, which is coordinated by UN-Women and is doing remarkable work; secondly, in the efforts in South Sudan, where the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan is carrying out very important support work in the area of prevention; and thirdly, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, which has a prevention mechanism that deserves our full support.

Here in the world of the United Nations, I will not go as far as to say that there has been a change in the narrative with the adoption of resolution 2242 (2015), but there has been an important change in the level of awareness on the part of the various delegations. In my view, resolution 2242 (2015) produced a "before" and an "after". What is most important and relevant in its content and the decisions therein is, in my view, the establishment of the Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security, which will be the real mechanism for monitoring and oversight in the Security Council. In other words, the Experts Group will ensure that the Council rigorously implements all of the existing resolutions with regard to women and peace and security. I think there are seven resolutions in that regard.. The Group meets on a monthly basis and is co-chaired by the United Kingdom and Spain. It deserves the Council's full support. Moreover, it will continously advise those of us who are heads of mission and are involved in informal consultations on the need to include in our statements the issue of the implementation of resolution 2242 (2015) on the agenda on women and peace and security.

That brings us to a very timely topic that is of interest to all delegations, which is the appointment of the next Secretary-General. We all know that there is an open debate with regard to the appropriate gender of the next Secretary-General. Members are aware of Spain's position, so I will not reiterate it. I would, however, like to mention that, in my view, there are two schools of thought on that issue. The first school of thought supports the idea that the next Secretary-General, ideally and all things being equal, should be a woman. There are many portraits of men in the entrance hall of the United Nations. Then there is another other school of thought, which thinks it is rather irrelevant whether it be a man or a woman. What is important is that it be a person who is truly committed to the agenda on women. In any event, I think that, in order to bring about a significant change in the agenda on women and peace and security, it is important that we continue along the path that we started down some time ago in a comprehensive manner and that we take a triple perspective on the matter.

First, from a local point of view, I believe that communities are truly important to the achievement of individual progress with regard to the agenda on women. Ms. Ayang can correct me. Secondly, I believe an assessment of legislation at the national level is fundamental and, to that end, we have a wonderful toolbox for that purpose. Thirdly, we need to work at the regional level. We have been doing so, but we need to strengthen that level of implementation so that it can be useful in promoting interaction between the whole United Nations system and regional organizations. I trust that, with that set of initiatives, we will, in a short period, succeed in averting conflicts by having improved prevention. For, unfortunately, conflicts affect the weakest, in this case women and children.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to welcome Ms. Maria Filomena Lobão Telo Delgado and to thank Angola for having convened this extremely important debate on women and peace and security in Africa. I would also like to thank the Assistant Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UN-Women, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Observer of the African Union and the Executive Director of South Sudan Women's Empowerment Network.

Over the past 15 years, the Security Council has managed to build a legal framework for the programme of action for women and peace and security through the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) and seven subsequent resolutions. The Council accordingly established a concrete political momentum thanks to which the contribution of women to the prevention and resolution of conflicts in Africa has significantly grown. That momentum has also helped reinforce the contribution of women through a number of mechanisms and legal frameworks that have been adopted in Africa in order to boost the participation of women in this area. As examples, I may point to the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and the appointment of an African Union Special Envoy on Women, peace and security. And in West Africa there have been numerous positive experiences.

While innovative methods have been found, they remain on the sidelines and have not been fully exploited within official frameworks. The conclusions that were adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women this past Friday affirmed the need for the participation of women in conflict prevention and resolution. They also affirmed the importance of the implementation of the Beijing Programme of Action and of achieving genuine, comprehensive gender equality. Those frameworks and mechanisms are very important, but to date they have not ensured the required level of participation. On that account, I would like to share the following remarks.

Mr. Gaspar Martins took the Chair.

First, Egypt supports the call of the Secretary-General to strengthen the role of women in peacekeeping activities, mediation and the prevention of conflicts. That call was supported by the three major reviews carried out recently in that area. We have also seen tangible evidence of the importance of the role of women in their countries, especially in Liberia, Malawi and Central Africa, where women are successfully governing.

Second, there are large gaps in terms of the Council's resolutions and their follow-up. We therefore need to adopt a methodology that will enable us to bridge those gaps so as to ensure the comprehensive implementation of those resolutions. We also need to step up the role of the Informal Experts Group set up in resolution 2242 (2015).

Third, several questions continue to be absent from our debate, such as the suffering of women who are living under foreign occupation. I point out also the exaggeration of the link with human rights and international humanitarian law, because it weakens the means for providing available protection in times of peace as well as in times of war. I reiterate that there is the problem of politicizing some of the issues linked to the two regimes of international law that I have mentioned. There are also problems with regard to the infringement of national sovereignty, and sometimes we rely on information that is unofficial and lacking precision. That distracts our attention from the issues that concern us, to their detriment, in particular the participation of women in conflict prevention and resolution.

Fourth, problems and weaknesses persist with regard to the appointment of women to senior level and leadership posts in political missions.

Fifth, our programme of action completely fails to take into account cultural particularities in its implementation, which negatively affects the participation of women in conflict prevention and resolution.

Sixth, it is important that discussions continue within the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, so that we can confront the challenges and problems standing in the way of the full participation of women in peacekeeping activities.

Seventh, Egypt is about to adopt a strategy on gender equality, and we very much welcome the statement made by Ambassador Macharia Kamau earlier, since the strategy to be adopted by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations can be an excellent starting point for bolstering the participation of women in conflict prevention and resolution, particularly in terms of action at the regional level.

Egypt attaches great importance to issues affecting the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution. We are devoting major efforts at the national level to improve the status and empowerment of women. We have supported the substance of resolution 1325 (2000) since its adoption. That resolution is an important milestone with regard to the status of women and their participation in the resolution of conflicts. Egypt was one of the first countries to adhere to resolution 2242 (2015) this past October. The national council responsible for the status of women in Egypt has fine-tuned a national plan of action based on resolution 1325 (2000). Egypt thus became one of 17 African countries to have a national plan of action of that kind.

Egypt has also organized a number of events concerning this issue since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) 15 years ago. We attribute great importance to capacity-building. The regional centre in Cairo responsible for specialized training in peacekeeping in Africa has held seven training workshops and two training workshops for trainers. The main topic of those workshops was the social dimension of peacekeeping and peacebuilding in implementing resolution 1325 (2000) between 2013 and 2015. Five other workshops are due to be held in June. Egypt is fully committed to this process and to implementating the plan of action, and takes part in all relevant regional and international forums.

The President: I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the text in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber. I would like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at the normal speed so that interpretation may be provided properly. I wish to inform all concerned that we will be carrying on this open debate through the lunch hour as we have a very large number of speakers.

I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Ashykbayev (Kazakhstan): We thank the presidency of Angola for focusing attention on the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict in Africa. My delegation would also like to support and commend the African Union's laudable initiatives, including the initiative to silence all guns in Africa by 2020 and the African Peace and Security Architecture aimed at strengthening capacities for peacebuilding, conflict prevention and response, post-conflict rehabilitation and development, with a focus on women and girls.

The recently concluded twenty-sixth African Union Summit, at which 2016 was designated the African Year of Human Rights, with its particular focus on the rights of women, called for special attention to be paid to the atrocities inflicted on women in times of peace and conflict. The much-welcomed verdict of the International Criminal Court on 22 March sends a clear signal that the widespread and systematic use of sexual and gender-based violence as a weapon of war must be eradicated — hence, the need for enhancing gender equality and empowerment by implementing resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions. Capacity-building is also necessary to achieve peace and security and a broad range of the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa.

The conflicts in Africa engulf neighbouring regions as well, with grave consequences. There is therefore a need to have closer collaboration among the African Union, the United Nations and African subregional organizations, as well as the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence against Women, and for Children and Armed Conflict, so that the new forms of hybrid peacekeeping operations are comprehensive and have clear mandates for the protection of civilians, especially women and girls. All operations must have well-qualified gender specialists in senior positions and adequately staffed gender teams integrated within the military, police and civilian components of peacekeeping operations. A gender focus must be intrinsic to the human rights, rule of law, transitional justice and security sector reform units in multidimensional operations.

Troop- and police-contributing countries should impart special gender-sensitive training and include more women in their national deployments to field agencies, especially in conflict zones. We call for the full implementation of the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel. We are confident that those important mechanisms will create the conditions necessary to prevent and peacefully resolve conflicts in Africa. At present, Kazakhstan is contributing by fielding its highly qualified military observers with gender competence to several peacekeeping missions in Africa. We hope to expand this deployment in the future.

The international community needs to provide greater support to African countries to involve women in grass-roots organizations working for a culture of peace, organizing political awareness and peace education, promoting community-based reconciliation, and ending all forms of impunity. Training has to be offered to women engaging in social reconstruction and integration activities, such as education, health care and social services. Women have a critical contribution to make in the management and security of camps for refugees and internally displaced persons, especially vulnerable women and girls, and in the demilitarization, demobilization and reintegration processes.

While progress has been witnessed in many countries at the grass-roots level, there is a stark deficit in the number of women included in formal regional and international peace negotiations and agreements, policy and decision-making, and in planning service delivery for their countries. These gaps in implementation need to be bridged together with host Governments, Department of Political Affairs missions, peacekeeping operations, international organizations and development agencies. In that regard, in 2015 Kazakhstan and the United Nations Development Programme launched a project to update professional skills to improve productivity, employment and development in support of the delivery of development assistance to countries in Africa through capacity-building training. The project, in which more than 70 specialists from African States participated — most of them women — focused on oil and gas exploration, public health and agriculture. The women of Africa are ready to be involved and actively implement national, regional and global programmes as part of post-conflict recovery; however, they need opportunity.

Kazakhstan supports the international community's implementation of comprehensive measures against violent extremism. At the seventieth session of the General Assembly, the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev, proposed the establishment of a global anti-terrorism network under the auspices of the United Nations, as well as the creation of universal mechanisms to bring perpetrators to justice. He also underlined that

> "humankind needs to shift its focus from routine conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation to a new development strategy that would make such conflicts meaningless" (*A/70/PV.13, p. 47*).

He proposed that the United Nations formulate a 2045 global development strategy as a vision for the United Nations' centenary. Another initiative is to reserve 1 per cent of the defence budget of each United Nations Member State, annually, for the Sustainable Development Goals Fund.

Kazakhstan believes that it is of vital importance that the Security Council maintains as a high priority the commitment to protect women and girls. My country pledges to be a strong voice on their behalf.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil) Let me congratulate Angola on having organized this debate under the guidance of its Minister for Family and the Promotion of Women, Ms. Maria Filomena Delgado. I also thank the Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Permanent Observer of the African Union and Ms. Palegi Ayang for their presentations.

Today's debate provides a timely opportunity to reflect on the results of the high-level review of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), and to focus on the needs and perspectives of Africa. Brazil took note with satisfaction of the recommendations of the global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and, in particular, its emphasis on prevention and the need to avoid the militarization of the women and peace and security agenda. As highlighted by the global study, increasing recognition of women's participation and empowerment is an end in itself and should not be part of counterterrorism strategies or efforts to prevent violent extremism conducive to terrorism; rather, it should be a part of the civilian peace agenda. That point is highly relevant for Africa, where most peacekeeping operations are deployed and where women's organizations have been playing and will continue to play a positive role in all peace processes, from mediation and prevention initiatives to reconciliation and reconstruction in the aftermath of conflict.

Notwithstanding significant challenges, African women have many success stories to tell. Women's organizations were at the forefront of the Liberian peace process. Post-conflict recovery initiatives led to the economic empowerment of thousands of women in Burundi and Rwanda. The policies and instruments of the African Union Gender Policy, as well as the Gender, Peace and Security Programme of the African Peace and Security Architecture, provide valuable tools to support the empowerment of African women as agents of peace. We also welcome the adoption last year of the African Union Agenda 2063 and its pledge to empower African women in all spheres of social life.

It is also heartening to note that three important peacekeeping operations in Africa are now led by women. We pay tribute to the commitment and leadership of Ellen Margrethe Løj, the Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan; Aïchatou Mindaoudou, the Head of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire; and Kim Bolduc, the Head of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara. Another woman, Hester Paneras, until recently steered the world's largest international police component — that of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur.

Yet this positive trend cannot offset the fact that women constitute merely 4 per cent of the 88,000 troops and police personnel currently deployed in United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa. In that regard, we recall resolution 2242 (2015), which calls upon the Secretary-General and Member States to double the number of women in military and police contingents of United Nations peacekeeping operations over the next five years. Female peacekeepers are uniquely well placed to build trust with local communities and to address sexual and gender-based violence. They also serve as role models to inspire women and girls to seek more rights and participation in our societies.

In recognizing and supporting women's role as agents of peace, the international community is also contributing to address one of the direst aspects of war that mostly affects women and girls. Sexual violence in conflict remains a serious concern for vulnerable populations impacted by war around the world, predominantly women and girls. Despite the strong African commitment to fighting sexual and gender-based violence, serious crimes against humanity, involving rape and sexual slavery, continue to occur in some regions of Africa. Brazil strongly condemns these abhorrent violations. We have long upheld the imperative to pursue accountability for serious crimes and abuses against women and girls, including but not limited to sexual and gender-based violence.

A milestone in this regard was the recent International Criminal Court (ICC) trial, presided over by Brazilian Judge Sylvia Steiner, leading to the conviction of Jean-Pierre Bemba for war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Central African Republic. This was the first ICC case to specifically focus on the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, and should serve as a powerful deterrent to would-be perpetrators.

As the current Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), I am deeply committed to gender equality in all political and security processes. A specific concern are the human rights of women of African origin, who are often subject to discrimination and prejudice outside Africa. In this spirit, Brazil and the United States co-organized last week a CSW side event on the racial identity of women of African descent in the diaspora, in the context of the 2015-2024 International Decade for People of African Descent. We believe that visibility and self-representation are powerful strategies for tackling racism and injustice.

Our South-South cooperation with Africa, a key priority of Brazilian foreign policy, is closely aligned with the women and peace and security agenda. In Guinea-Bissau, we helped enable health institutions to assist women and girl victims of gender-based violence. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we have financed projects to assist victims of sexual and gender-based violence. In this respect, I cannot fail to refer to the inspiring work of Dr. Denis Mukwege, a physician who has treated thousands of survivors of rape in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and a role model not just in Africa, but worldwide.

Through the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, I have witnessed first-hand the essential role played by women in building sustainable peace. The Brazilian Peace Operations Joint Training Center in Rio de Janeiro regularly holds workshops and courses to train peacekeepers on gender issues and the protection of women, where rigorous standards regarding the conduct and discipline of personnel are upheld.

At the domestic level, let me highlight the drafting process of our national action plan on women and peace and security. We are striving to elaborate an effective plan to address the four pillars of the agenda: prevention, protection, participation, and peacebuilding and recovery. This will include but will not be limited to measures to increase the percentage of female peacekeepers; to foster the participation of women in all peace and security processes, including in our Foreign and Defence Ministries; to further improve relations between troops and civilians, particularly women and girls, in peacekeeping operations; and to fortify humanitarian assistance and technical cooperation initiatives on gender issues in conflict and post-conflict situations. Since the women and peace and security agenda is not solely a Government matter, we have established a broad-based working group comprising representatives not only of relevant ministries and the armed forces, but also of academia and civil society, to debate and draft our national action plan.

In conclusion, let me reiterate Brazil's firm commitment to both the promotion of peace in Africa and the crosscutting campaign on gender equality and women's empowerment. We will continue to advance these inseparable agendas at all levels of the United Nations.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Akbaruddin (India): We appreciate Angola's initiative in convening of today's debate on a subject of widespread concern. We have also carefully noted the issues raised in the concept paper before us (S/2016/219, annex) and by all the briefers today.

While we take note that advances have been made in Africa through several laudable regional and State-level initiatives in gender empowerment, including in the context of the prevention and resolution of conflict, there is no denying the considerable challenges ahead. Despite the increased focus on the women and peace and security agenda, along with the normative framework that has evolved during the past decade and a half, women and children continue to be major victims. According to various United Nations reports, women globally constitute less than 4 per cent of signatories to peace agreements and less than 10 per cent of negotiators at peace tables. Moreover, women constitute only 3 per cent of the military and 10pc of the police personnel who are deployed by the United Nations in peace missions. These numbers reflect the enormity of the challenges that we are confronted with.

The concept paper speaks of several short-term and long-term measures that may be needed to improve the condition of women in the context of what we are discussing today. We agree that, in the shorter term, there is a need to increase and institutionalize the involvement of women in conflict prevention and resolution. This requires not only normative advice but capacity-building and institution-building at the ground level. Therefore, to us the issue of women and peace and security cannot be seen in isolation from the wider societal context involving gender and development issues.

Over the years, the international community has been addressing the issues of gender equality, empowerment and development, now in an increasingly holistic manner. The Commission on the Status of Women, which had a high-profile and successful ministerial segment in its 60th anniversary year, just a few days ago here in New York, and the work done by the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women continue to make significant progress in pushing the gender empowerment agenda, which in itself has a transformative impact on societies, leading to more sustainable development and prosperity.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1), which builds upon the earlier Millennium Development Goals, also highlights the importance of sustainable development for ensuring peace and security. India has been an active participant in the comprehensive deliberations on women-related issues in various United Nations bodies. India has also been among the major contributors to UN-Women since its inception.

In the specific context of United Nations peacekeeping, India has been the lead troop contributor, with participation in 48 of the 69 peacekeeping missions, out of which 22 are in Africa. While there has been only a marginal increase overall in the number of women peacekeepers, the first-ever female police unit formed for the United Nations was provided by India for deployment in Liberia. The unit has been widely appreciated for its work and for setting a pioneering example. India has also contributed female officers as military observers and staff officers, in addition to their deployment with medical units.

In another significant capacity-building initiative, the New Delhi-based Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping, in partnership with UN-Women, is now conducting the third United Nations female military officers course for 40 women military officers from 26 countries. India remains ready to contribute further internationally both to the normative and the practical aspects relating to women's empowerment, including in matters of peace and security.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden.

Mr. Thöresson (Sweden): I have the honour to speak today on behalf of the Nordic countries, namely, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and my own country, Sweden.

At the outset, we would like to thank you, Mr. President, and the Angolan presidency of the Council for this month for organizing today's debate on an important subject. We would also like to thank this morning's briefers — the Executive Director of UN-Women, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Permanent Observer of the African Union and the Executive Director of the South Sudan Women's Empowerment Network — for their valuable insights, but also for their efforts in working to advance the agenda for women and peace and security.

We live in turbulent times in which conflicts around the world are on the rise, leading to appalling death tolls and the forcing of millions of people to leave their homes. Often, those conflicts take place in countries that have already experienced armed conflict, or in regions that have been war-torn for decades, thus illustrating the difficulty of permanently ending conflicts and sustaining peace.

Through the agenda on women and peace and security, we have the possibility of doing things differently and of increasing the likelihood of achieving sustainable peace. The recommendations of the global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), entitled *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace*, along with resolution 2242 (2015), have given us the momentum we need to move away from an ad-hoc, add-on approach and to start including women on an equal footing with men at all stages of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. That must be a top priority for all of us. Any international actor working for peace and security who wants to be relevant and effective in the twenty-first century has to embrace the agenda for women and peace and security in a coherent and effective manner.

Preventing conflicts is the most lifesaving and cost-efficient way to foster peace and avoid suffering. It therefore merits much more attention than it currently receives, not least in Africa. The role of women in all of those efforts and the need for women's equal representation and active involvement in all governmental, non-governmental and community forums cannot be overstated. I would like to highlight three particularly important aspects relating to the issue.

First, we need to focus on representation. It is essential that we enhance women's influence and meaningful participation at all levels and stages of peace processes. Peacebuilding must be inclusive. Only through women's active participation in peace processes, such as those in Mali, South Sudan and Somalia, can we ensure that the needs and interests of society are being truly reflected and addressed. The global study highlights the indisputable evidence that shows the positive links between women's active participation in peace processes and the likelihood of peace agreements being signed, implemented and sustained.

Secondly, we need to focus on women mediators. The resolution of conflicts requires skilled, impartial and respected mediators who can encourage settlements that reflect the needs of the entire population. While women's participation increases the likelihood of success, peace mediators are all too often exclusively men, and we must therefore increase the number and proportion of women mediators. That is a strong priority for the Nordic countries and has resulted, among other things, in the establishment of networks of women peace mediators at the national, regional and international levels.

Thirdly, we need to show leadership. Promoting women's participation in conflict resolution and prevention is about promoting change. In order to do that, we must be brave and persistent and show committed, proactive leadership. Enhancing gender equality and women's contribution to peace and security will require us to address a wide array of issues, including the shortage of resources and the uneven distribution of those resources, which are often at the core of inequality. In order to achieve real change, political commitment must be accompanied by sustainable financing. We must allocate resources and have the right expertise. That issue is one of leadership, and we must do more to integrate that aspect into all of the strategic analysis, planning and operational work of the United Nations.

In conclusion, conflict analysis must include gender aspects that reflect and address the specific needs of women and men, girls and boys. We cannot ignore the various roles that women play, nor the insights that women bring to the table. Sustainable development, peace and security can never be achieved if half of the population is excluded. In order to take our common commitment seriously, we need to make sure that women's voices are being heard and that our decisions are influenced by the needs and realities of women who live in countries enduring conflict and emerging from it.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Vrailas: I speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries Turkey, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Today's open debate on the topic "Women and peace and security: the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa" is a timely and welcome one, not least because 2016 marks the African Year of Human Rights with Special Focus on the Rights of Women. The concept paper (S/2016/219, annex) prepared in order to facilitate todays's debate provides an excellent foundation for reflection and action.

The degree to which women are excluded from playing their full role in conflict prevention and resolution across the globe is illuminated by several sobering statistics. One is that, in the period between 1992 and 2011, women made up less than 4 per cent of the signatories to peace agreements and 10 per cent of the negotiators at peace tables. Nor can women's involvement be seen as a mere nicety. The findings of the global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), entitled *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace*, show that when women are included in peace processes, the probability of a lasting peace settlement increases significantly. We wholeheartedly support the goals of resolution 1325 (2000) and the Council's subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security, including resolution 2242 (2015), which reinforce awareness about the agenda for women and peace and security and call for the dedication of greater resources by the international community for that agenda's implementation and monitoring.

The EU welcomes the efforts under way in Africa to strengthen the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict, both in the political and policy contexts and on the ground. We also welcome the progress being made under the African Gender, Peace and Security Programme, with financial support from several EU member States. We commend the fact that the African Union Commission has created the position of Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, and we appreciate Ms. Diop's advocacy work. We look forward to the further development of initiatives aimed at implementing the African Peace and Security Architecture, in which gender mainstreaming is identified as a goal.

At the United Nations level, it is also important to support the development of the Peacebuilding Commission's gender strategy, including engagement on the issues of gender equality and women's participation, and the country and civil-society consultations that are being pursued in that regard.

We commend the African Union's firm zero-tolerance stance with regard to the accusations of sexual exploitation and abuse in conflict situations, including by forces deployed to protect populations. We must intensify the international community's efforts to address sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and to tackle its root causes, as well as the impunity that so often follows such violence and the provision of support to survivors. Increasing women's political participation and leadership, including in the fields of justice and security, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, is a key facet of such efforts.

Countering violent extremism is a growing preoccupation and priority that must be treated as an integral part of conflict prevention and resolution strategies. Extremism is the lifeblood of numerous conflicts, and it disproportionately affects women and girls. Women and girls can, however, also be part of the problem when they serve as foreign fighters or recruiters, but they are nevertheless an indispensable part of the solution. With that in mind, the human rights of women and girls must be respected and safeguarded. The importance of ensuring women's participation and leadership in countering terrorism and violent extremism was underscored in resolution 2242 (2015).

The Secretary-General's subsequent Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism incorporates significant elements in that regard. States, regional and international organizations and the United Nations system must all work towards that shared goal. For its part, between now and 2020, the European Union will allocate more than €100 million to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, including in Africa. That is one element of the EU's broader efforts to intensify its engagement on countering violent extremism.

In conclusion, the EU looks forward to working with African partners and others in the international community to realize the imperative of involving women as peacemakers and conflict preventers. That is important not only for its own sake but also as a vital element in maximizing the nexus between peace and security, human rights and development.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. Bird (Australia): Conflicts are profoundly gendered experiences. Australia therefore commends the ongoing efforts of the United Nations and the African Union to secure the full and effective participation of women at all stages of the prevention, resolution and management of conflicts and post-conflict reconstruction in Africa.

We also commend the work of the United Nations Office in West Africa on advancing gender equality. We welcome its commitment to adopting a new regional action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and to establishing an annual dialogue with leaders in West Africa.

Last year's global study demonstrated the critical importance of women and women's groups in bringing peace to their communities. Where women exercise real influence in the negotiation process, the prospects for reaching agreement increase; the chances of agreements being implemented grows; and the likelihood of agreements failing diminishes.

The high-level review on women and peace and security also left no doubt: women's meaningful participation is vital to enhancing conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. We must also take heed of the 2015 peacebuilding architecture review and expand women's political participation and leadership beyond the peace table. This is a responsibility shared by us all. We must actively seek out opportunities for women and women's groups to participate meaningfully to prevent conflict and sustain peace.

The participation of women in peace and security requires a significant cultural change, including across the United Nations system, to ensure that human rights and the protection of civilians are considered to be a system-wide responsibility. We must respond to possible violations of human rights at the earliest possible signs. Australia is highly supportive of the Secretary-General's Human Rights Up Front Initiative in this regard.

Australia has been active in implementing the commitments we made at last year's high-level review.

Australia is pleased to be the first and largest donor to UN-Women's Global Acceleration Instrument for Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action (GAI). This is an important tool in strengthening the capacity of women's organizations to participate in peace processes and respond to crises and emergencies.

Australia is pleased that the GAI has already been implemented in Burundi, a nation where women have historically played important roles in mediation and reconciliation processes. With the support of the GAI, and Australian funding, the network of women mediators is scaling up its activities to support women's participation in formal and informal peace negotiations. Australia urges other Member States to support the GAI.

In conclusion, let me thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this debate and for the opportunity it presents for all Member States to reaffirm their commitment to ensuring the effective engagement of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): I would first of all like to thank the Angolan presidency for having organized this important debate on the crucial role that women can play in African peace processes, and, of course, the briefers for their contributions.

Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union and wishes to add the following remarks in a national capacity.

There is clear evidence that no sustainable and lasting peace is possible without women's active involvement in peace processes. This is why Italy has always been at the forefront in supporting the women and peace and security agenda, welcoming and co-sponsoring resolution 1325 (2000) and, more recently, resolution 2242 (2015).

I wish to draw the Council's attention to the following four points.

First, concerning the inclusion of women in prevention so as to combat radicalization, I would stress that in Africa more than elsewhere, there is a strong need not only for peacekeeping, but also for positive engagement in mediation and peacebuilding to support national reconciliation and post-conflict reconstruction and combat the rise of violent extremism. Women can greatly help in these processes because they can give an invaluable contribution to preventing the radicalization of youth and young women. As an example, women in Africa are often the first, and sometimes the only, teachers of future generations, on whom we can rely for building peace and stability. They are the first medical assistants of family members. They often act as silent CEOs in family governance.

Resolutions 2250 (2015) and 1325 (2000) can mutually reinforce each other; that is why Italy decided to co-sponsor the Commission on the Status of Women side event on the complementarities between women and peace and security, and youth and peace and security a few days ago. Young women and girls in Africa often take on crucial, burdensome roles, and their leadership should be supported and encouraged. Italy was proud to be a European Union facilitator and to have co-sponsored resolution 70/138 on the girl child, presented by the Southern African Development Community and adopted at this session of the General Assembly.

Secondly, gender-based issues and perspectives should be included at all negotiating tables, including when discussing strategies covering non-proliferation and disarmament, and conventional arms and small arms and light weapons, and, more evidently, in United Nations peace operation mandates, including pre-deployment training, an area of established Italian expertise.

Since 2005, through the Centre of Excellence for Stability Police Units, in Vicenza, we have been training more than 8,000 police personnel units, many of which are deployed in peacekeeping operations in Africa. In this regard, the Centre introduced new modules such as gender protection in peace-support operations in order to improve and update its training programmes.

To that end, we are currently revising our second 2014-2016 national action plan on women and peace and security for a third edition, which encourages women's employment in the national armed forces and State police, as well as their participation in peace operations in conflict areas.

Thirdly, women's involvement in peace processes must be seen through the prism of the Sustainable Development Goals. On a long-term basis, economically empowered women can contribute much more effectively to sustainable development and to sustainable peace and security. Working on this two-pronged objective in our partnership with African Union countries, also in the framework of the Addis Ababa Action Plan and Africa's Agenda 2063, is thus one of our priorities. We have to bolster women's access to quality education and health, and work to end all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination, including harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage.

Lastly, concerning our future, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1) and the Sustainable Development Goals are our most valuable tools for action. It is for this reason, we believe, that issues pertaining to both Africa and women are constantly referenced in most of the recommendations. Africa and women have something in common: they represent our hope for a better future.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Mminele (South Africa): Let me first express my appreciation to Angola, as President of the Security Council, for having organized this important open debate on the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts in Africa. My delegation also wishes to thank the Executive Director of UN-Women for her presentation.

South Africa reaffirms its commitment to the full and effective implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010) and 2242 (2015) as the building blocks for advancing the women and peace and security agenda.

It is important to acknowledge that resolution 1325 (2000) reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding. It also stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts aimed at maintaining and promoting peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution. The adoption of the resolution was a milestone, as it constitutes a landmark international framework that addresses the key role women play in conflict management, conflict resolution and sustainable peace.

South Africa firmly supports the call for women to be involved in decision-making processes and conflict resolution. As key decision makers in society, we believe that women in Africa and elsewhere have an important role to play in addressing the root causes of conflicts, as well as playing an important role as mediators in conflict situations. A society that takes on board the interests of women in an inclusive approach to governance and development is a more stable society as it ensures the well-being of the entire population.

Regrettably, women continue to remain excluded from the various mediation and conflict resolution initiatives at the highest level. The obstacles that impede women's full participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding include the active, systematic cultural exclusion that continues to exist in many parts of the world, including Africa. We would like to emphasize the need to enhance the inclusion of women as high-level envoys and mediators and to increase women's roles in peacebuilding. That would require a systemic shift from women's participation and role in only certain areas, such as advisers on issues of sexual exploitation and abuse, to one that would allow the mainstreaming of women's voices throughout all aspects of governance, development and peace and security-related matters.

It is against that backdrop that South Africa launched the Dialogue Forum on Conflict Resolution and Peacemaking. The aim of the Forum is to train and mentor women in conflict resolution and to produce a new pool of mediators. The participants came from different countries all across the African continent who would work in the fields of mediation, peace and security. Participants included ambassadors, officials from Ministries for Foreign Affairs, officers of regional organizations, such as the Southern African Development Community and the African Union, as well as women working in civil society. As our Foreign Minister, Ms. Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, has argued,

> "women are always peacemakers, and the ones who are always exposed to situations where strong men want to take over power".

We will continue to call for increasing the equal participation, representation and full involvement of women in preventive diplomacy efforts in Africa and around the world.

South Africa recognizes the importance for women to have unfettered access to justice in conflict and post-conflict settings, including through gender-responsive legal, judicial and security-sector reform processes and other mechanisms. Women's legal status and rights must be ensured in post-conflict situations. Strengthening the legal framework to address issues of discrimination against women with respect to land ownership, access to economic opportunity and employment, education and health care is an essential component of gender-responsive peacebuilding.

South Africa believes that Member States have the primary responsibility to put an end to impunity and to prosecute the perpetrators of sexual violence against women and children. We condemn all violations of international law committed against civilians, women and children in armed conflict and post-conflict situations. We believe the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund could play an important role in supporting women's participation in peace processes in Africa.

In conclusion, we will continue to work with the rest of Africa and the world to ensure that we protect all women from violence and discrimination.

The President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations.

Archbishop Auza: My delegation wishes to thank the Angolan presidency for convening this particularly important open debate on the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa.

Women are drivers of development and the flourishing of human talent in multiple fields. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1) cannot be achieved without the contribution of women. Sustainable Development Goal 16 aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. In many countries in Africa, in particular in the Great Lakes region, peaceful and inclusive societies are still a distant dream. Women can greatly contribute to their realization.

In that regard, the Holy See expresses its appreciation for the initiatives promoted by the Security Council and by Governments to raise awareness and arrive at a fuller recognition of the vital role of women in preventive diplomacy, mediation, peacekeeping missions and peacebuilding processes. That recognition, however, must be fully translated into action in order to unleash skills and capacities that allow women to bring order out of chaos, community out of division and peace out of conflict. Their special gift in educating people to be more receptive and sensitive to the needs of others around them and beyond is crucial in conflict resolution and in fostering post-conflict reconciliation.

My delegation wishes to pay special homage to the women who have had profound and lasting effects on the lives of millions of people and on the development of nations through their selfless and long-term work in education, health care and the formation of values among the young. Those women, even in the most difficult circumstances, distinguish themselves for their bravery, constancy and dedication. Women and girls who have become victims of rape and other forms of violence during conflicts find security and understanding in the institutions run by those women, more often than not by religious women.

Their spirit of sacrifice for the good of others brings death to some of them. My delegation feels duty-bound at this moment to remember with gratitude and sorrow the four sisters from the Missionaries of Charity — Sister Anselm from India, Sister Marguerite and Sister Reginette from Rwanda and Sister Judith from Kenya — who were massacred by cowardly fundamentalists on 4 March in Aden, Yemen. They devoted their lives to the poor and elderly women, a dozen of whom were also killed with them. The same terrorists kidnapped an Indian priest from the same institution, and they have claimed to have crucified him on Good Friday. Pope Francis has prayed that this pointless slaughter will awaken consciences, lead to a change of heart and inspire all parties to lay down their arms and take up the path of dialogue. No greater sacrifice can be made for peace and reconciliation than to lay down one's life for it.

The Holy See has been very attentive to the inspiring work of women in Africa in all fields. Education has been key to that empowerment. If women are to become prime drivers of sustainable development and peaceful societies, ensuring that all girls and women have access to education is indispensable. Improving access to education for women will not only redound to the fuller realization of their potential and greater professional opportunities, it is also key to better educated future generations that are capable of ushering in and maintaining just and peaceful societies. I am proud to say that the Catholic Church, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, is the leading provider of quality education for all, ensuring to the best of its abilities that no woman or girl would be left unschooled and preparing them to become dignified agents of their own personal flourishing and active protagonists in building strong families and peaceful communities.

Sadly, for far too many women, there is still a steep uphill battle and struggle to emancipate themselves from situations of marginalization, violence, abandonment and exclusion. The world today continues to be confronted with various old and new forms of violence directed against women and girls, in particular the use of rape as a weapon of war during conflicts, abuses in refugee camps, the trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation, forced abortion, forced conversion and forced marriage. Instead of being eradicated, some of those acts of violence have emerged in even crueller forms, constituting some of the most horrendous violations of human rights.

The obligation to put an end to those barbaric acts against women and girls is incumbent upon every one of us, upon every Government and, in a particular way, upon the Security Council.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ethiopia.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): Allow me to join others in expressing appreciation to you, Mr. President, for organizing this very important debate on the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa. We commend Angola on that count. I also wish to thank all the briefers for their briefings.

We fully subscribe to the statement delivered by the Permanent Observer of the African Union. What follows are some comments on a few points in our national capacity.

There is no doubt that women are uniquely positioned to nurture a culture of peace, and there is also no doubt that enhancing their effective participation will have a meaningful impact, whether it be in preventing and resolving conflicts or in contributing to peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding endeavours. What was said this morning by the Executive Director of the South Sudan Women's Empowerment Network is instructive in that regard.

In that context, the adoption of the landmark resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, 15 years ago was indeed significant, but the question to ask is how much progress has been made in implementing it. Obviously, it has been far from satisfactory. We commend the Secretary-General for initiating a study to review the implementation of that seminal resolution, and hopefully the recommendations from the review will help create far more opportunities for women's effective participation in issues of peace and security.

As far as Africa is concerned, women and girls are indeed the most vulnerable groups in society, and they are the ones who bear the brunt of violence in the various conflict situations afflicting our continent. That is why the women and peace and security agenda is so critical for us. The African Union's Gender, Peace and Security Programme seeks to increase women's participation in the promotion of peace and security, as well as enhance the protection of women in conflict situations in Africa; it is indeed a step in the right direction. Furthermore, the adoption of regional action plans by the various regional economic communities aimed at implementing resolution 1325 (2000) is also a positive development.

Although the efforts at the regional, continental and international levels provide a useful framework for the women and peace and security agenda, what matters the most in making a real difference in improving the plight of women and enhancing their effective participation is implementation at the national level. In that regard, Ethiopia subscribes to all of the relevant regional and international treaties and conventions on the rights of women and is committed to the women and peace and security agenda. Accordingly, it has been striving to promote women's participation in all spheres and at all levels of Government, and a lot of progress has been made over the past two decades.

In the area of peace and security in particular, it is indeed a source of great satisfaction for us to note that Ethiopia is the largest contributor of female peacekeepers, with 558 of them deployed in various United Nations peacekeeping missions. We are working to further enhance our contribution of women to peacekeeping efforts in terms of military and police personnel in the coming years.

The growing number of allegations with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations peacekeepers is indeed a matter of serious concern. As one of the largest troop-contributing countries to United Nations peacekeeping operations, Ethiopia takes the matter very seriously and subscribes to the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy. Our peacekeepers are given the necessary predeployment training and, whenever we have encountered allegations of misconduct, we have committed ourselves to carrying out the necessary investigations and taking the appropriate action. Nevertheless, we believe that, in order to make real progress in this critical area, there can be no selectivity. What will help us achieve the desired objective is a comprehensive and holistic approach that encompasses all the civilian, military and police components, engaging all relevant stakeholders in a constructive manner and addressing the root causes.

Finally, let me conclude by reiterating my country's firm commitment to improving the situation of women, who constitute half of our societies and whose effective participation is extremely critical to achieving the noble objectives that we have set for ourselves in the peace and security, governance and development spheres.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Roet (Israel): As we are approaching the end of the month, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and commend you, Sir, for your able stewardship of the Security Council this month.

All around the world, the lives and well-being of millions of women and girls are threatened by conflict and strife. They are often the first victims of war and the last to share in the fruits of peace. Yet when it comes to making the decisions that impact them most directly, the voices of women are too often silenced.

Since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) we have witnessed greater determination to engage women in conflict resolution. But in too many places around the world, women are still denied a place in the halls of power. They are kept out of critical discussions on war and peace and excluded from decision-making and negotiations.

Women are proven catalysts of change, and the time has come to ensure that women everywhere have an opportunity to become active agents of peace instead of passive victims of war. Today, as we witness the rise of new forms of conflicts and terrorism, women's participation is crucial to bringing about a safer, more sustainable and more secure future.

Nowhere is the active role of women in waging peace more critical than in Africa. For decades, countries across the continent have been plagued by civil war, ethnic conflict and sectarian strife. At the same time, violent extremist terrorist groups, such as Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram, are destabilizing States across Africa. They are conducting vicious campaigns of terror against innocents, including widespread torture and the burning down of entire villages.

Women and girls face the nightmare of being abducted, torn from their families and sold as sex slaves — a truly horrific and cruel fate. From Libya to Nigeria to Kenya, the ongoing violence has brought devastation to millions. Women across Africa know the cruel impact that war and terror have on their families and their communities. After terror strikes, after the militias have passed through, they are the ones fending for themselves and struggling to feed their children. They know the cost of conflict, and many are refusing to stand by in silence while the violence rages on.

Today, women have started to take their fate into their own hands and to take an active role in shaping the future of their own societies. It is up to all of us to ensure that women have an opportunity to play leading roles in peace negotiation and conflict resolution. That is the path to a sustainable peace for everyone.

In Africa, that process has already begun. From the adoption of the Maputo Protocol, in 2003, to the African Union's Gender, Peace and Security Programme for 2015-2020, important steps have been taken. Such mechanisms, structures and policies enable women to take their rightful place at the decision-making table.

Ms. Delgado took the Chair.

Across Africa, women are taking the initiative to develop innovative platforms for peaceful elections. They have established strong networks of civil-society groups to promote women's strategic participation and leadership in peace and security governance in Africa. However, despite those important initiatives, the number of women that participate in field-based political missions or in peace talks in Africa is still limited. We must remove all gender-based barriers so that women in Africa can develop the skills and expertise needed to take on leadership roles in their societies.

Women in Africa are shifting the balance of power, and the State of Israel stands ready to assist them. We know at first hand the destructive consequences of terror and conflict, but we also know the constructive role that women play in leading the way to peace. As an ally and partner of many African countries, Israel is committed to helping women in Africa to take an active role in deciding the fateful questions of war and peace. The partnership between Israel and Africa is not new. For over 40 years, Israel's Agency for

International Development Cooperation (MASHAV) has been conducting programmes throughout Africa to reduce gender disparities and to train women to participate in decision-making processes. In cooperation with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, every year MASHAV organizes a workshop for African women on the political empowerment of women. The goal is to discuss the role of, and opportunities for, women in peacebuilding, mediation and conflict resolution. MASHAV encourages and supports women in their efforts to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to become political leaders.

Let me recount the story of one of those women, Ms. Dudziro Nhengu. Dudziro always wanted to participate in political life in her home country, Zimbabwe, but opportunities were limited owing to the economic situation and the ongoing political violence. She therefore decided to participate in MASHAV's training programmes, one in Kenya and another one in Israel. Dudziro quickly put the business and entrepreneurial skills that she had honed at MASHAV into practice in Zimbabwe to design a programme to empower women to initiate their own businesses and transform former military bases into training centres. Today, Dudziro is a blogger, an activist and a Programme Associate of UN-Women. It is programmes and partnerships like MASHAV that contribute to our shared goal — ensuring that women everywhere can achieve their full potential.

A famous Jewish proverb asks, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" In Africa, women have answered that question loudly and clearly. They are proudly standing up for themselves and for everyone else. The proverb concludes by asking, "If not now, when?". For the sake of peace and security in Africa and around the world, the answer must be today; the time for women to lead is now.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Poland.

Mr. Krzywosądzki (Poland): I would like to thank the Angolan presidency for convening today's debate on this important topic relating to the maintenance of peace and security in Africa.

Poland aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union. I would, however, like to add a couple of remarks from our national perspective.

As underlined in the excellent concept paper (S/2016/219, annex) prepared by the delegation of Angola for this debate, the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts in Africa simply cannot be overestimated. As shown by various studies, the participation of women in conflict prevention, as well as in peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts, has a positive impact on the potential success of those efforts. There is no doubt that the role of women in the African continent is growing. They play a key role in many economic and social activities. The increasing number of women's associations — the positive example of Ethiopia can be cited — should also be seen as an important sign of the growing position of African women.

There are also positive developments in the political area. Rwanda now leads the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Women in Parliaments ranking, with more than 63 per cent of the members in the lower house of the Parliament being women. Poland also welcomes the increasing role of African women leaders, such as President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia and President Ameenah Gurib-Fakim of Mauritius. It is no wonder that the African Union has declared the current decade as the African Women's Decade.

While recognizing the progress in the situation of African women, we have to bear in mind the challenges ahead of us. As stated in resolution 2242 (2015), adopted in October 2015, the relatively low number of women in senior positions in political, peace and security-related institutions can have a detrimental impact on the maintenance of international peace and security. We need more women engaged in all United Nations-led activities, especially in peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding. We also need a predictable and sustained funding mechanism for the women and peace and security agenda. That is why Poland has decided to earmark a minimum of 15 per cent of all of our future funding for the Peacebuilding Fund to be dedicated to women's specific needs, in particular to advancing gender equality in post-conflict situations.

Let us not forget, however, the fate of women as victims of conflicts. That is why Poland recognizes the importance of and plans to sign the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians. We also call for the strict implementation of the zero-tolerance policy for acts of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations peacekeeping personnel. In that regard, it is also important to achieve a high level of coherence among all of the ongoing reviews of United Nations peacekeeping operations, the peacebuilding architecture and the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

Let me end by stressing that tapping into the immense potential of women is essential for sustaining peace. We hope that the entire international community, including the United Nations, will support and complement those efforts with the aim of achieving success in ensuring peace and prosperity in Africa.

The President: I now give the floor to the representaive of Canada.

Mr. Grant (Canada): I am honoured to speak on behalf of Canada in this debate on the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict in Africa. We see this debate as an important and logical initiative aimed at giving meaning in the African context to the international women and peace and security agenda in the immediate aftermath of the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000).

(*spoke in French*)

In October, the United Nations marked that anniversary with a high-level review on the implementation of the resolution and the launch of the global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), which provides us with a complete view of what has been accomplished on the women and peace and security agenda and outlines what work remains to be done.

Canada believes that the case for the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict has been well made. Gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls as agents of peace and development, full respect for their human rights and protection from, and responding to, sexual violence are now accepted as prerequisites for sustainable peace and prosperity. The work remaining is to apply those principles on the ground, including with respect to conflicts in Africa, which is our topic today.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada commends the work of the African Union in advancing the women and peace and security agenda by creating policies and mechanisms such as the African Union Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and the Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy Framework. The African Union's appointment of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security in 2014 is another positive step towards increased and equal participation by women in peace operations. Canada also applauds the African Union's continuing commitment to women's issues with a thematic focus on "Women's empowerment and development" in 2015 and "Human rights with special focus on the rights of women" in 2016.

While it is important to include women and women's groups in high-level processes to prevent and resolve major conflicts, it is equally important to empower women at the local level. As just one example, I cite the remarkable Jos Declaration of 2014 by the women of the city of Jos in Plateau state, Nigeria. As part of the broader Jos inter-communal dialogue process, inspired women from across communities that had been in conflict for some 20 years came together to address the causes of conflict, commit to continuing action to resolve the differences and make firm recommendations to the Government and local councils of elders on the way ahead. Canada is humbled by the courage of those women and honoured to have been able to support their journey.

Canada also supports projects in Africa to address the specific needs of women and girls in conflict and emergencies. We are mounting a strong response to sexual violence in conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the African Great Lakes region. Our programming includes providing access to justice for survivors and holding perpetrators to account, including through the deployment of experts from Justice Rapid Response.

(*spoke in French*)

Canada's national action plan on women and peace and security focuses and guides Canadian interventions in conflict and post-conflict situations to ensure that women and men are treated equally and with dignity and that women are always afforded full participation. On International Women's Day this year, the Government announced that our action plan will be renewed, which is a sure sign of Canada's continued commitment to advancing the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution, including in Africa. Canada looks forward to continuing to work with all those who are dedicated to ending conflict in Africa and to including women in those efforts.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

First of all, I would like to praise Angola for having taken the initiative of organizing this debate on the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa and for having prepared the concept paper (S/2016/219, annex). I also thank the briefers.

Women's call for peace has been unfailing and widespread. They play an important role in conflict prevention and resolution. Their participation is generally crucial to the effectiveness of all peace and security efforts when they are meaningfully involved. As the concept paper suggests, in cases where women's groups are able to exercise a strong influence on the negotiation process, the chances of reaching an agreement are higher and sustainability increases by at least 20 per cent and continues to grow over time. Women have proven to be pertinent partners in discussions on the prevention and resolution of conflict, the maintenance of peace and security, and post-conflict peacebuilding. Women's participation in conflict prevention in Africa has facilitated a more inclusive appreciation of the causes of and alternative solutions to conflict. Women's inputs into conflict prevention continue to bolster actions that address varying needs, thereby creating broader buy-ins to peace accords and ultimately producing sustainable peace.

In Africa, several mechanisms, policies and structures have created an environment enabling women to play a key role in peace and security. The 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and the 2004 Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa committed African Union member States to the full and effective participation and representation of women in peace processes, including the prevention, resolution and management of conflicts and post-conflict reconstruction in Africa, as stipulated in resolution 1325 (2000).

Women across Africa are also playing unparalleled roles in early warning and the prevention of violence, including election-related violence, and they have developed innovative platforms for peaceful elections in several countries preparing sensitive elections. At the same time, there are various obstacles and challenges that prevent the full integration of those endeavours into more formal approaches and policies. A limited degree of gender analysis of conflict and peace factors, the sparse inclusion of gender issues in early warning initiatives and the recurrent challenge of providing a timely response to indicators of conflict often lead to ignoring information both from and about women that can help devise comprehensive and sustainable response strategies.

We welcome General Assembly resolution 66/255, on civilian capacity in the aftermath of conflict in support of national capacities for post-conflict peacebuilding and efforts to broaden and deepen the pool of experts, giving particular attention to mobilizing the capacities of developing countries, in particular among women, as vital to successful United Nations peacebuilding activities. In that regard, we underline that the Secretariat's effective outreach for those purposes should be undertaken in accordance with the existing rules and regulations and in close consultation with Member States. NAM hopes that this open debate will contribute to ongoing efforts to integrate the women, peace and security agenda into conflict prevention, with a focus on Africa.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

Ms. Frankinet (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Belgium fully aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union, and in my national capacity I would like to make the following observations.

My delegation would first like to thank the Angolan presidency for having organized this debate and for the opportunity for us to participate. My delegation also thanks all the participants for their statements.

The participation of women in conflict resolution is a priority for Belgium at both the national and international levels, illustrated by the fact that one of the six pillars of our own national action plan on women and peace and security is dedicated to it. Women must be able to decide their own fate and contribute to conflict prevention and resolution and peacebuilding. Numerous studies show that women's participation increases the effectiveness of humanitarian aid, the credibility and quality of peacekeeping operations, the rate of economic recovery in post-conflict situations and the durability of peace agreements.

Belgium wishes to commend all the initiatives taken in Africa to increase the participation of women in the prevention of violence and early warning systems. However, it is disappointing to note that the participation of women in conflict prevention, peace processes and post-conflict political transition remains a great challenge. In our view, mixed-gender representation remains the best way of ensuring a balanced decision-making process that takes into account the whole population and all other important factors.

To contribute to that goal on the African continent, Belgium contributes €2 million to the implementation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo of the UN-Women project there that supports the rights and participation of Congolese women in the framework of resolution 1325 (2000). That project invests in supporting economic empowerment and training within the area of women's leadership. In Mali, Belgium co-chairs with UN-Women the group of donors on the issue of gender. Belgium welcomes the increased number of women in the Malian Government following the latest ministerial reshuffling and sees it as a positive development in the acceptance of women's key role. Nevertheless, my country regrets that women continue to be underrepresented at the decision-making level from the outset of mediation processes, and poorly represented in the implementation phase. Belgium hopes that its 2015-2017 national action plan on women, peace and security will help to address those shortcomings.

In conclusion, I should like to stress that Belgium will continue to pursue the implementation of its own plan of action and to give priority, both on the policy and operational fronts, to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). Belgium calls on all countries to take into account the resolution's provisions on protection, participation and prevention. In the same vein, Belgium encourages all African countries to ratify the Maputo Protocol, also known as the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. Women are a force for peace. It is essential that they be able to play their role fully as political actors in the service of peace, security and post-conflict reconstruction.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Laassel (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): My delegation thanks the Angolan presidency for organizing this open debate on the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa. I also thank all speakers for their contributions to this debate.

The international community unanimously recognizes the positive contribution that can be made by women to conflict prevention and resolution. History has shown that peace and stability are more sustainable when women are involved in the implementation of conflict prevention and resolution measures. The reason for that is simple — women are a fundamental part of society and, as such, their involvement in these processes makes it possible to fully and effectively take their needs and concerns into consideration.

In its general recommendation No. 30 published in October 2013, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women noted

> "the low participation of women in institutions working on preventative diplomacy ... It is only by including female stakeholders and using a gendered analysis of conflict that States parties can design appropriate responses."

Moreover, the Committee recognized that women play a leadership role during periods of conflict, and affirmed that the inclusion of a critical mass of women in international negotiations and peacekeeping activities can make a difference.

On the normative front, the important role that women play in conflict prevention and resolution and their participation on an equal footing in all efforts to maintain and promote peace and security have been reaffirmed in a number of United Nations documents, in particular Security Council resolutions, including the landmark resolution 1325 (2000). That resolution enshrines the relevant provisions of international instruments related to the rights of women.

With the support of its women, the African continent has overcome many conflicts. Indeed, African women have demonstrated a great capacity to contribute to efforts for lasting peace and reconciliation. In several of the conflicts that continue to beset our continent, African women have made effective contributions, including through non-confrontational means, to resolve conflicts and focus more on collective well-being. African women have distinguished themselves as talented negotiators in many situations, particularly due to their non-involvement in fighting. Themselves often targets or even victims of violence, in particular of a sexual nature, African women have found practical measures to prevent conflict and joined in efforts intended to rebuild and achieve lasting peace. African women have also played an important role in inter-ethnic integration and the dissemination of a culture of peace at all levels, from early childhood to adulthood. That has helped in many instances to create social cohesion and dispel sociocultural dissension, and enabled different ethnic groups to live together harmoniously in the same space or side by side.

Today's world requires us to strengthen the involvement of women in conflict prevention and resolution processes. Women must participate at all stages of negotiations on conflict prevention, peace, transitional justice and reconstruction. We cannot simply consider them as victims of conflicts or as observers of the decision-making process. Strong political will and firm commitment from the international community are needed to promote women's empowerment and to ensure their full and systematic participation in all aspects of social life and the various peace processes.

Finally, it is imperative to support the work of civil society, including organizations of women human rights activists, and to promote international justice mechanisms. They are the eyes and ears of the international community in the promotion of peace and women's rights.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Slovakia.

Mr. Galbavý (Slovakia): I wish to thank you, Madam, for organizing this debate. I would also like to thank the briefers for their comprehensive presentations.

Over the past few decades, gender equality and women's empowerment have become a positive and forward-looking vision of Africa's development. At the continental level, African leaders have adopted strong instruments, such as the Maputo Protocol, the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and the African Women's Decade. In January, the African Union declared 2016 to be the African Year of Human Rights, with particular focus on the rights of women. According to United Nations statistics, African countries now constitute a third of the countries with national action plans designed to implement resolution 1325 (2000), which brings an important African perspective to the women and peace and security agenda.

Despite the substantial efforts undertaken to implement the women and peace and security agenda and the progress that has been made in last 15 years, numerous challenges remain. Women worldwide continue to suffer disproportionately from conflict, sexual and gender-based violence and violent extremism, which threaten to overturn the fragile gains that have been made in the past. Going forward, we all must accelerate the implementation of the commitments our Governments made to women 20 years ago in order to achieve gender equality in the post-2015 period. The United Nations must provide continued support and assistance to women in their role as agents of peace and, at the same time, more effectively prevent women from becoming victims and protect them in situations of conflict.

Slovakia strongly supports the equal and full participation of women in international peace and security and calls for the full implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions. Women's strategic participation and leadership in conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding, and more generally in all aspects of society, enhance the chances for sustainable peace. Without the equal and active participation of women, we will not be able to address or achieve the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals.

It is broadly agreed that security sector reform is essential to post-conflict peacebuilding and the creation of the conditions necessary for reconstruction and development. Security and justice sector institutions must be representative of and responsive to the needs of both women and men. A United Nations approach to security sector reform must be gender-sensitive throughout its planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases. Resolution 2151 (2014) on security sector reform underscores the importance of women's equal and effective participation and full involvement in all stages of the security sector reform process. Gender-sensitive security sector reform is key to developing security sector institutions that are non-discriminatory, representative of the population and capable of effectively responding to the specific security needs of diverse groups. Security sector reform must also include the reform of recruitment processes and the improvement of the delivery of security services to address and prevent sexual and gender-based violence.

In conclusion, I should also like to take this opportunity to reiterate our strong support for the

United Nations zero-tolerance policy against sexual exploitation or abuse by United Nations peacekeeping personnel. Also, I would like to recognize here the important work of women's human rights defenders working in conflict-affected situations and the need for their protection.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Menkveld (Netherlands): At the outset, I would like to thank Angola for convening this open debate on the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa.

Nowadays there are many African women who are empowered, going to school, joining the workforce and sustaining their families. It is very encouraging to see that more women are being nominated and appointed to leadership positions, such as Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and Force Commanders. In various positions and among civilian staff of the United Nations, the number of women has increased substantially. If, in the near future, we are also able to increase the number of women among the ranks of the military and the police, we will make more measurable steps towards sustainable conflict prevention and resolution.

But we also see a backlash and fear that, as the global study emphasized, women's empowerment threatens the social fabric. We see that in many conflict areas across Africa women still are not involved in formal conflict prevention and resolution. Women in those areas daily face risks and violence, sexual exploitation and abuse.

Violent extremism is on the increase. The disturbing trend in the use of sexual violence as a tactic of terror and the mass-scale violence against women are examples of the specific targeting of women by extremist groups. As a consequence, women and girls often face stigmatization from their families and community members. We need to stop those disturbing developments now. We can do so by increasing women's roles in conflict prevention and resolution and by emphasizing that women are also leaders and agents of change.

By integrating gender perspectives in conflict prevention and resolution, we can build just, sustainable and peaceful societies everywhere — societies where women are safe and go to school, where women are actively involved in the future of democratic societies and where women actively participate in politics. Last but not least, in such societies women have equal economic opportunities to take care of their families and communities.

We have seen the results of the efforts of powerful African women, such as Nobel Price Winner Leymah Gbowee, who demanded peace in Liberia during the peace process in 2003 by starting a women's peace movement. There are many more agents of change like her.

The topic of women and peace and security is one of the priorities of the foreign and development policy of the Netherlands. It is time to put words into action. We believe that we can improve women's roles in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa through three important pathways to change.

First we need to exchange knowledge and good practices on conflict prevention and women's participation from the local to the international level. We need to prevent conflicts by bringing together diplomatic, development and economic actors and perspectives. The Netherlands supports the implementation of the national action plan of Mali and has appointed gender experts to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We can also achieve change and peace by supporting and working with civil society. Our new third national action plan is an example of that. Together with our civil society partners, we are contributing to an enabling environment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan so that women can meaningfully participate in conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding, protection and relief and recovery. If we want to improve women's roles in prevention and conflict resolution, we have to extensively engage local communities.

While acknowledging that States are primarily responsible for the prevention of conflicts, we also see the shared responsibility of the international community and civil society to build a more secure world. To give an example, within the framework of our national action plan, women's organizations in the Sudan, at the grass-roots level, have convinced conflicting groups and tribes to put down the weapons and start a dialogue.

The third pathway to change is to increase the protection of women. We cannot solely focus on women's participation without ensuring them protection and safety. The prevention of, and protection from, sexual violence is an issue that continues to need our full attention.

In October 2015, we Member States attended the open debate (see S/PV.7533) on women and peace and security. We shared our dreams and hopes for women in conflict environments. But we need to rise up and translate those hopes to practical improvements. We need to move beyond the rhetoric. We can do that together by protecting women, working with civil society and exchanging knowledge and good practices.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of the Netherlands continues to play its role as a partner for peace, justice and development. The Netherlands continues to strongly support the implementation of resolutions 2171 (2014), 1325 (2000), 2242 (2015) and the other follow-up resolutions on women and peace and security.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

Mr. Nibishaka (Rwanda): I thank you, Madam President, and your delegation for organizing this important debate on the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution Africa and for the comprehensive concept paper (S/2015/219, annex) you circulated among Member States. The fact that this is the second open debate on Africa during Angola's presidency of the Security Council shows your country's commitment to conflict prevention and sustainable peace on our continent. I also thank the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka; the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun; the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Macharia Kamu; as well as Ms. Paleki Ayang, for their respective briefings earlier today.

As the 2015 global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) highlighted, and in line with the recommendations of the just-concluded reviews of peace operations, effective conflict prevention requires a holistic approach that encompasses short-term operational measures and longer-term structural approaches. Such a holistic approach recognizes the fact that women's participation in the design and implementation of conflict and post-conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities is critical to the sustainability of peace and development in the aftermath of a conflict.

Prior to the global study, during the past few years there has been growing recognition by Governments, international organizations and civil society organizations of the importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women in the continuing struggle for equality, democracy and human rights, as well as for poverty eradication and development — all of which are structural measures that address the root causes of conflict.

Today, in nearly every country and region of the world, there has been progress on achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, although that progress has been uneven and the gains remain fragile in Africa, including a growing number of cases of violence against women and girls in armed conflict in several African countries. However, as much as women remain the subject of violence in armed conflict, in the past decade many post-conflict societies in Africa have embarked upon the difficult transition from armed conflict towards resolution and peace building, and have recognized that building lasting peace that sustains post-war economic, political, and social development requires the full participation of all citizens, including women and girls.

Speaking from experience, today there are many avenues through which women's inclusion in post-conflict peacebuilding can bolster peacebuilding initiatives, and thus contribute to a positive peace outcome. For example, individual women, as well as women's organizations, adopt a variety of strategies for reducing fear and uncertainty following conflict and for fostering an environment of trust and collaboration. Furthermore, women who adopt positions of political leadership could provide a direct alternative to traditional political actors, adding to the post-conflict impetus of change and addressing the injustices of the past. They often use their gender identity and common social experiences to bridge divides, providing an example for other politicians to work across party lines, a condition that is often lacking in most post-conflict situations.

As the Council is aware, come April we will be commemorating the twenty-second anniversary of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, which left women as the majority of our population in the direct aftermath of the genocide. Despite their victimization and in a spirit of endurance, the women of Rwanda immediately got up and started rebuilding their country by assuming non-traditional social and economic roles as heads of household, community leaders and financial providers, meeting the needs of their communities and families.

Following this, there was a concerted effort in the Government and among women's groups to address the needs of Rwandan women and to engage them in the all-important processes of national reconstruction and reconciliation. Today, the Rwandan story in many ways represents a process of collective social learning that goes beyond our borders.

Besides going beyond the threshold of 30 per cent of women in Government decision-making bodies, as provided by the Constitution, and the overwhelming majority of women in our Parliament, Rwanda's security organs, in collaboration with other Government agencies, local communities and civil society, have launched initiatives to protect and respond to violence that targets women and girls; an example is the operational one-stop centres that offer a wide range of free services for gender-based-violence victims run by the national police. We have also set up nationwide gender desks in the police and army and in the national prosecution agency to offer gender-sensitive services to victims.

Currently, Rwanda is the leading African troop- and police-contributing country providing female police and correctional officers to United Nations peace support and peacekeeping operations; we have 220 female officers serving in various missions, particularly in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. Those officers actively contribute to combating and raising awareness about violence against women in the communities they serve. We are stepping up efforts to increase this number.

They also serve as advisers on gender-based violence and share best practices between other officers and local authorities. For these reasons, we support the full implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1960 (2010), which insist that all peacekeeping mandates incorporate provisions that specifically identify steps to address sexual violence. This should include the clear identification of women protection advisers alongside gender advisers and human rights protection units.

Despite improved practices in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) 16 years after its adoption, multilevel challenges persist and continue to hinder women's participation and their protection and enjoyment of security in their homes and countries, including a deficit of opportunities for women to exercise leadership and the continued underrepresentation of women in conflict-prevention, conflict-resolution, protection and peacebuilding processes.

Both the international community and Member States need to deploy greater efforts in order to maintain previous gains, with a view to reducing the inequalities observed at various levels in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

Finally, we urge all post-conflict Member States to do more in meeting these challenges. We also look forward to the full implementation of the recommendations of the independent review of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Portugal.

Mrs. Pucarinho (Portugal): I wish first to thank Angola for having organized this very timely open debate and for giving Member States the opportunity to express their views on such a pressing issue.

From the outset, Portugal has been a staunch supporter of the women and peace and security agenda, as we believe it is crucial to address the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls and to enhance their participation in peace processes.

Over the past 15 years, the Security Council, through the adoption of several resolutions, has recognized the important role of women and girls in the maintenance of international peace and security. However, while recognizing the significant progress achieved and the establishment of a strong normative framework, we all know that enormous challenges remain, also due to the changing nature of conflicts.

Women and children are disproportionately affected by conflicts all around the world, including in Africa. Besides being the victims of conflicts and of gender-based violence, African women and girls are also actors performing different roles and contributing to the shaping of existing gender relations. Women in

Africa account for over 50 per cent of the continent's population and workforce. It is simply unthinkable that peace could ever be achieved and sustained without their involvement and consistent engagement. Their participation at all stages of conflict prevention and resolution is key to ensure that their views are heard, their rights protected and their needs addressed.

Beyond their numerical weight, girls and women in Africa have their own perceptions, interests, priorities and sensitivities, partially related to specific gender roles and relations in the communities and societies. Their voices must be heard, and their potential must be fully developed and fully used, as their experiences and resources are admittedly an essential contribution to conflict prevention, resolution and reconciliation.

The women and peace and security agenda in Africa is of particular concern during conflict and at post-conflict stages, as several obstacles remain to the effective integration of women in conflict prevention in Africa. Among other constraints, there is a lack of funding for that purpose, and women's initiatives are very often relegated to the informal spheres.

Women in different capacities, such as care providers in families and communities, as community leaders, as religious and traditional leaders and as political representatives and citizens, can perform highly critical roles in conflict prevention in the security and political areas, and at the same time, as development agents. We all know that all these things are related: conflict prevention, peace, security and development.

The approval by States of national action plans for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security is, in this context, a very important tool to effectively promote the role of women and girls in conflict prevention and resolution. Portugal adopted in 2009 its first national action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), and a second edition of that action plan was adopted in 2014 for the period 2014-2018.

The Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP), of which six African countries are members, also adopted a strategic plan to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. The plan includes specific actions to be carried out in the field of conflict prevention and the promotion of a culture of peace by its member States, by the Executive Secretariat, the CPLP Female MPs Network and civil-society organizations. Planned activities to be carried out in partnership with other international organizations include the preparation and implementation of national action plans to implement resolution 1325 (2000); training and capacity-building of resolution focal points; and technical and military cooperation among CPLP member States to implement the resolution. By mainstreaming gender equality in diplomatic, military, security, justice and development sectors, the implementation of those plans seriously contributes to counting women as active and constructive stakeholders and key players within that framework.

Finally, I would like to welcome the fact that such organizations as the African Union and NATO have nominated special envoys on women and peace and security, and that an increasing number of countries have developed national action plans to implement resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions later adopted by the Council.

Further efforts are necessary to maintain and build upon what has been achieved so far and to ensure greater progress and new commitments to the agenda by Member States, regional organizations and, certainly, by the entire United Nations system.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Eler (Turkey): At the outset, allow me to express our strongest condemnation for the heinous and cowardly terrorist attack perpetrated in Lahore, Pakistan, yesterday. We firmly stand in solidarity with the Government and the people of Pakistan in their fight against terrorism.

I would like to express our appreciation to the Angolan presidency for organizing this timely debate on the theme of women and peace and security, with a special focus on the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa.

Last year was a landmark year for gender equality and the women and peace and security agenda. We not only celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, but we also marked the fifteenth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000). The high-level review of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), along with the review processes carried out by the High-level Panel on Peace Operations and the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture, yielded a sound foundation to reflect on an international framework of cooperation concerning conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, with a strong emphasis on the empowerment of women. The United Nations reaffirmed its firm commitment to strengthening the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution with the adoption of resolution 2242 (2015).

The severe effects of conflicts on women and girls in various locations across the globe continue to constitute a significant challenge that needs to be addressed. Furthermore, our world is now facing the largest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War, with an increasing influx of displaced populations due to protracted conflicts and the lack of security and stability, which gives rise to even further difficulties to vulnerable groups, including women and girls. Moreover, the horrific acts perpetrated against women and girls by terrorist organizations, such as Boko Haram and Da'esh, demonstrate the need for a comprehensive strategy for countering violent extremism and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

African women and girls are not immune to the difficulties and challenges I have just described. On the contrary, during times of conflict and insecurity, there is no doubt that African women suffer the most as victims of widespread sexual and gender-based violence. Yet during hard times, women also play a primary role in building and supporting peace. We are cognizant of the fact that women in Africa have been enablers of economic development, peace and social solidarity. It should be underlined that overall stabilization and development efforts in Africa cannot succeed if women lack security and access to political, economic, social and judicial formal and informal settings.

In that context and within the framework of a multifaceted African partnership policy, Turkey encourages increased political and social participation, as well as the economic empowerment of women on the continent. To that end, Turkey implements joint projects at the multilateral and bilateral levels with the African Union and African countries for the capacity-building of women in socioeconomic development. Turkey also attaches importance to the efforts aimed at promoting and advancing the women and peace and security agenda in Africa. To mention one recent example, Turkey co-hosted with the Somali federal Government and the United Nations an event on women and peace and security at the margins of the High-level Partnership Forum: New Deal Somalia, held in Istanbul from 23 to 24 February. The meeting included the participation of international partners and women leaders from the central and regional Governments of Somalia and civil society representatives. The participation of the First Ladies of Turkey and Somalia, who delivered closing speeches at the event, added a strong voice to the cause of African women.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore that Turkey will continue to work with African partners and the international community to ensure women's active involvement in sustaining peace, stability and prosperity in Africa.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Boukadoum (Algeria): I thank Angola for its constant focus on our continent and for convening this important debate on the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa, as well as for the concept paper (S/2016/219, annex) that you, Madam President, circulated in preparation for this debate.

Algeria aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Iran as the Chair of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

I wish to recognize the work of the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, as well as the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun; Ambassador Macharia Kamu of Kenya, in his capacity as the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission; and, of course, Ms. Paleki Ayang, the Executive Director of the South Sudan Women's Empowerment Network, for their contributions.

The landmark resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, awakened the Security Council to the vital role women play in conflict prevention and resolution, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and post-conflict reconstruction. Today's legitimate question must be: what have we done since then? Of course, we more often stress the importance of equal participation and women's full involvement in all efforts towards the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, as stated in the resolution. But we again reaffirm the need for the inclusion of women in the processes of conflict prevention and resolution, as those processes are directly linked to the sustainability of peace agreements and to decreasing the levels of recurring violence.

We should never forget or ignore the fact that women are often the primary victims of conflicts and of terrorist acts and that even sexual violence and all violence against women have become a weapon in conflict situations. Let us not forget that we have another resolution, resolution 2242 (2015), which underscores and stresses the need to ensure the participation and leadership of women in countering terrorism and violent extremism. When working with Governments, we also need to reach out to local communities, and women in particular, to resolve disputes through inclusive participation and dialogue. Lasting peace requires that key actors, women specifically, have access to institutions. As we have noted, and as was indicated in the concept paper, inclusive peace processes result in a 20 per cent increase in the likelihood of a peace agreement lasting at least two years. Obviously, it is necessary to repeat that women's empowerment is not a luxury; it is a necessity for the sake of peace.

Women's participation in conflict prevention in Africa facilitated a more inclusive appreciation of the causes and alternative solutions to conflict. For his briefing this morning, I thank Ambassador Téte António of the African Union. He rightfully pointed out to all what our African institution has been doing and intends to do, thereby setting an example to be followed and supported. In our continent, several mechanisms, policies and structures were created to foster an environment conducive to women playing a crucial role in peace and security.

The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the Maputo Protocol, and the 2004 Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa committed African Union (AU) member States to the aforementioned resolution 1325 (2000). Moreover, 2016 is the African Year of Human Rights, with particular emphasis on the rights of women. Just a few days ago, my capital, Algiers, hosted the fifth meeting of the General Assembly of the Kigali International Conference Declaration on the role of security reform in putting an end to violence against women, which was marked by the presence of the Secretary-General.

We emphasize the importance of better synergies between regional, continental and international early-warning structures. These structures have benefited from women's involvement, in particular in Africa. Today, progress is being made in detecting and monitoring early signs of conflict, and this is enhanced by local initiatives across Africa that facilitate ownership. Conflict-prevention mechanisms have been established at the regional and local levels that provide useful insights into potential crises. However, these mechanisms need to be strengthened so they can produce timely and tangible outcomes.

In the African Union, the Continental Early Warning System is being operationalized and collaboration with the regional early-warning mechanisms is being developed. Moreover, this mechanism could benefit from strategies developed by the United Nations in its national conflict-prevention work, specifically with regard to building local actors' capacity in this area and addressing the root causes of conflict and not only its symptoms, as such structures and the involvement of women have proven critical to preventing and rapidly addressing potential crises.

The experience of the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes is that, at the regional level in Africa, practical efforts are being made to focus on gender in line with AU commitments at the regional level, such as those pertaining to the Southern African Development Community, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa.

As a demonstration of the importance that Algeria attaches to the role played by women in the political sphere, it has called for the implementation of the gender-equality programme for an extended period from 2015 to 2017, in association with UN-Women. We will absolutely and firmly pursue our efforts with our partners from the United Nations and regional organizations to empower women at local, national and regional levels.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Namibia.

Mr. Emvula (Namibia): Allow me to thank the briefers for their insights. I wish to thank you, Madam President, and your country, Angola, the President of the Security Council for the month of March, for organizing this open debate on the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict in Africa, a subject that is close to our hearts in Africa. I wish also to extend Namibia's appreciation to you for focusing your presidency on issues that are important to the African continent, the Middle East and other parts of the world — issues that need the Council's renewed attention.

Namibia associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

As we focus on this subject matter, it is important to recognize that more must be done to fully engage women in conflict resolution and mediation. Women's full participation in peacemaking is fundamental to building peace and security. The Charter of the United Nations not only committed its members to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, but also unequivocally reaffirmed fundamental human rights and the equal rights of men and women. Despite this strong commitment, the understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls and the role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding developed slowly within the United Nations.

Under the presidency of Namibia, the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security on 31 October 2000. The adoption of that resolution marked another milestone in the process of elevating women's role in peace and security to a high political agenda and urged an enhanced role for women in preventing conflict, promoting peace and assisting in post-conflict reconstruction and the incorporation of a gender perspective into United Nations operations. Through resolution 1325 (2000), the increased participation of women in peace processes was recognized as a goal for the first time in the United Nations history.

It is important to note that through the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the conventional impression of women as helpless victims of war was replaced by an understanding of the important role women play in fostering peace and security. We believe that when women are involved as agents of peace, sexual violence against women and children in war and conflict situations can be addressed. Resolution 1325 (2000) is the first-ever resolution adopted by the Security Council that specifically addresses the disproportionate impact of war on women and stresses the significance of women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts to maintain and promote sustainable peace and security.

Namibia attaches great importance to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). In the region of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Namibia was the first country to ratify the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development in October 2009. The Protocol calls upon members States to put in place measures to ensure that women have equal representation and participation in key decision-making positions and peacebuilding processes. This explains why Namibia contributes one of the largest female contingents to the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. Namibian women in peacekeeping missions have demonstrated remarkable commitment, high competencies and aptitudes for innovation. Today, Namibian women are also steadily rising through the ranks and expanding their influence at an ever-increasing rate, serving bravely at national, regional and global levels in many different ways. More critically, they serve and sacrifice as courageously as any man out there, as they did during our struggle for liberation.

At the global level, it is high time that we establish and implement an ambitious but achievable agenda for action on women in armed conflict and allow an increased role for women in the peace process. The provisions of resolution 1325 (2000) must be framed in State obligations to address structural and systemic gender inequality and discrimination through comprehensive legislation, policies and institutional reforms. Our work and advocacy should now be aimed at the everyday and we should never give up. We must succeed, as we cannot afford to fail our next generation of women.

History has clearly demonstrated that those women who have been afforded the opportunity to participate in peacekeeping missions have shown that courage and leadership recognize no gender, as women who participate in peacekeeping missions do so facing the same risks and are prepared to die, live and lose limbs just like their male counterparts. We must constantly bear in mind that resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions, especially resolution 2242 (2015), require us to take robust action at the national level to put policies in place that will pave the way for international deployment of female peacekeepers. Equal to the same task, it is our obligation to implement the recommendations of the global study on resolution 1325 (2000).

We have just adopted the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1), which encompasses our collective targets that will not only have a life-changing impact on hundreds of millions of women, but will also help to create a better world that is more equitable. However, its effective implementation will depend on its simplicity and its transformational power to sanction, within its life span, an immense global response to the most pressing issues of women empowerment and, more importantly, the full participation of women in peace and security. Resolution 1325 (2000) is for the benefit of the whole human race, and has been intended to be so since its adoption in October 2000. It should be regarded as a global objective that reflects peace, equality and development. Its effective implementation in good faith should not be half-hearted.

Mr. Plasai (Thailand) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I thank the presidency of Angola for organizing this open debate. I also thank all the speakers for their important perspectives. Today's debate is timely in that it allows us to take stock of progress achieved thus far and to reflect on how best to support the role of women in the prevention and settlement of conflicts in Africa and elsewhere. In that regard, I should like to share the Kingdom of Thailand's views on how the Security Council and the Member States can support the effective participation of women in initiatives and peace and security processes.

First, men and women must enjoy equal opportunities. When women and girls enjoy social, economic and political opportunities equal to those of men and boys, their contributions to society are limitless. National efforts should therefore focus on ways of ensuring equality of access for women to education, jobs, finance, social security, health-care services and justice. The emancipation of women involves the non-exclusive promotion of development and growth, which is crucial to preventing conflict and maintaining peace.

Secondly, women's rights must be promoted and protected. In times of conflict, the suffering of women and girls can be minimized if strong national institutions exist to ensure the rule of law and the effective monitoring of and response to human rights violations. Post-conflict rehabilitation for those affected should also be supported by a comprehensive victim assistance programme.

Thirdly, women, who are too often seen exclusively as victims, are also effective agents of change. Women bring invaluable perspectives to the meaning of peace and security. Sustainable conflict prevention and resolution can be more easily ensured when women participate actively and meaningfully in relevant political decision-making and peace processes. In 2015, the Permanent Mission of Thailand commissioned the International Peace Institute to conduct evidence-based research on this very topic. The research confirms with substantial empirical evidence that peace processes involving women have a higher percentage of success and sustainability. We therefore urge more action on the part of the United Nations and the Member States to enhance women's capacity to play a more prominent role in this regard.

Fourthly, recent initiatives in Africa to emancipate women are already having a positive impact. We welcome the African Union's five-year Gender, Peace and Security Programme (2015-2020), launched in 2014, and the African Women's Decade. They both provide an excellent platform for implementing resolution 1325 (2000) and for supporting the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa. We also see benefits in the inclusion of women in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme within the African Union's five-year Programme. Clearly, dynamic civil and women's organizations have also united women in Africa to address common threats, such as the rise of extremism.

We support strengthened cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union in conflict prevention and resolution, particularly through peacekeeping operations. In that regard, we have made a concrete contribution by participating as the first non-African country in the joint African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. With this first-hand experience, we can safely conclude that female peacekeepers can effectively engage with the local population with a very high degree of cultural and gender sensitivity. In conflict situations, that can help build trust and confidence and create an environment conducive to peace for women and girls in particular. We strongly urge the United Nations to appoint more gender advisers and to integrate a stronger gender perspective into the United Nations peacekeeping mandates.

Let me conclude by reiterating that in Africa, as in all parts of the world, women and men must be recognized as equal partners in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as in other endeavours. That requires strong common political will, which in our view is still lacking despite recent progress in the promotion of the role of women in peace processes in many parts of the world. For our part, the Kingdom of Thailand is ready and committed to joining the international community in its efforts to promote women's effective participation in peace and security in Africa and beyond.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Momen (Bangladesh): We thank the Angolan presidency for organizing this important open debate in what has been dubbed as the "month of Africa" in the Council.

Bangladesh takes this opportunity to recall our pioneering role in contributing to the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) during our membership in the Security Council in 2000 and 2001. The global study that was conducted last year on the resolution's implementation has done a commendable job in charting the progress achieved in terms of measurable results and tangible objectives. It is encouraging to see that women have assumed a central role in 67 per cent of peace agreements that have been mediated or facilitated by the United Nations in recent times. We expect this to be replicated further at the regional and national levels. As we heard this morning from the briefers, the normative and standard-setting exercise that has been undertaken by the African Union captures the underlying principles and objectives of resolution 1325 (2000) and its successor resolutions.

The changing nature and dynamics of conflicts and the diverse motivations of the actors involved tend to escalate the situation for women during armed conflicts. While the protection needs of women remain a foremost concern, it is critically important to empower women and to allow them the space to serve as instrumental and effective buffers against conflicts. This is not likely to happen in an extraneous manner, and should ideally evolve in an organic fashion from within the conflict-affected society.

In Bangladesh, our sustained investment in women's empowerment and gender equality has allowed us to make the overall environment further conducive to preventing the escalation and recurrence of conflicts. It is perhaps no surprise, as manifest in other contexts around the world, that violent extremists and terrorists make it a point to reverse the trend of women's development and empowerment in advancing their twisted narrative of social norms and arrangements concerning women. It would be crucial for women's groups and organizations to scale up their voice in protest of such trends, and to enhance their engagements with those women who are forcibly or unwillingly made to be complicit with such misguided agenda of violent extremists and other such actors.

In order to find resonance with the African situation, we would wish to reinforce five key issues in relation to the women, peace and security agenda, as we see them from our national perspective.

First, the confluence of the reviews undertaken last year around the United Nations peace and security agenda needs to be translated into, among other things, a further accent on developing national plans of action corresponding to resolution 1325 (2000) and affiliated resolutions. There are a number of best practices available in diverse socioeconomic contexts that may be built upon further through in-depth national consultations. The critical role of men and boys, particularly youth, needs to be factored into the plans of action.

Secondly, women's role in conflict prevention, mediation, negotiations and peace agreements needs to be bolstered in real terms beyond mere showcasing. It would be critical to invest in women's leadership in order for them to effectively contribute to decision-making and negotiations with a view to mainstreaming women's specific needs and concerns into the broader framework of peace agreements or settlements.

Thirdly, the need to enhance women's participation United Nations United Nations peacekeeping operations, including in senior leadership positions, has been duly recongized as an enabling factor for ensuring the protection of women and enhancing women's role in preparing the ground for sustainable peace. As a major troop-contributing country, we remain convinced of the qualitative difference that women can make as peacekeepers on the ground. We are working with the United Nations and other partners to further enhance women's participation among our troops and police and to strengthen and mainstream the work of gender advisers in missions.

Fourthly, women's role in peacebuilding is widely recognized, but remains constrained by a lack of resources and, at times, expertise. Within the United Nations, there is scope for reinvigorating a system-wide approach to implementing the gender strategy of the Peacebuilding Commission to use it as a possible guide for a customized approach to specific contexts. In Bangladesh, we are currently in the process of setting up a peacebuilding centre, where we wish to undertake specialized research and training on women's role in peacebuilding, among other issues.

Lastly, the overriding importance of prevention and eliminating sexual and gender-based violence during armed conflicts cannot be overemphasized. The political momentum that has been galvanized to this cause must be sustained.The importance of ensuring justice for such crimes and promoting healing and reintegration for the victims should constitute an essential element in halting and reversing such crimes anywhere in the world. Bangladesh stands ready to share its experience in this regard, especially with regard to promoting justice and recognition for the victims of sexual and gender-based violence committed during our Liberation War in 1971.

The African continent is setting examples on a range of norm-setting issues, and also with their implementation. With the exemplary leadership shown by the women of Africa, we are confident that further new dimensions to strengthening women's role in peace and security will emerge in the days ahead, including to enrich the work of this Council.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Anshor (Indonesia): I thank the Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of UN-Women and the other briefers for for their constructive insights on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in Africa.

Resolution 1325 (2000) has called for women's participation in conflict management, conflict resolution and sustainable peace. My delegation underlines the 2015 global study of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), which emphasizes that the meaningful participation of women is crucial to the effectiveness of all peace and security interventions. My delegation is of the view that enhancing the participation and meaningful involvement of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding in Africa is an imperative that the United Nations needs to continue to support.

My delegation sees the need to prioritize and institutionalize women's leadership in peace and security in the continent. This could be done through the enhancement and promotion of women's leadership in peace, security and sustainable development. The strengthening of a platform for women across all levels of African societies to exchange, share and harmonize strategies for women's leadership and to build coalitions in the promotion of peace and security is therefore essential in the efforts to address women, peace and security. Other steps that may be taken are the strengthening of women's leadership capacities and skills to engage in peace and security process and negotiations, as well as the promotion of gender mainstreaming in security sector institutions and policies, all with the aim of establishing the meaningful participation of women in peace, security and mediation in Africa.

At the United Nations, an important next step that can support the momentum reached thus far is to continue promoting an integrated approach to the women and peace and security agenda across all areas of work of the United Nations system. Avenues to strengthen interaction and information flows across the entire system should be pursued to eliminate the fragmentation and silo approach that can hamper effective responses. Implementation requires significant work on the part of the broader United Nations system and Member States, with civil society organizations at all levels.

My delegation considers that not only do gender perspectives need to be mainstreamed in deliberating peace and security matters before the Council, but that a similar method and approach are also needed when Member countries address the root causes of conflict in other United Nations organs, such as the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council.

In the context of peacekeeping operations, my delegation firmly believes that women peacekeepers are far better equipped to protect women and girls before, during and after conflicts and war. It is in this understanding that Indonesia stands committed to increasing the number of its women peacekeepers under United Nations mandates aimed at providing protection for women and girls, two of the most vulnerable victims of conflict in the continent. Henceforth, Indonesia will also register its full support for Council requests to increase women peacekeepers in Africa and beyond.

A strong United Nations mandate aimed at promoting the women and peace and security agenda is made even more robust when supported by local and regional organizations that are very well-suited to and familiar with geographic and cultural characteristics. We commend the African Union for having developed the mechanisms, policies and structures necessary to create an enabling environment for women to play a key role in peace and security. These mechanisms include the African Union five-year Gender, Peace and Security Program 2015-2020 and the evolving African Peace and Security Architecture.

Indonesia stands ready to engage and collaborate with Africa within the context of peace and security. Indonesia's commitment and readiness is well founded in the leaders' declaration issued at the sixth Asia-Africa Commemorative Summit, held in Bandung in 2015, which among other things reiterates the principle and benefits of multilateralism in strengthening peace and prosperity in Asia and Africa, as well as in further contributing to the maintenance of international peace and security through United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Let me conclude by reiterating Indonesia's support and steadfast commitment to the women and peace and security agenda through the United Nations, as well as through cross-regional cooperation and collaboration. We will continue to be engaged in existing deliberations and processes aimed at enhancing the international framework to strengthen the protection of women in conflict and the role of women in peace and security, as well as to participate in every United Nations-mandated peacekeeping operation involving women peacekeepers.

The meeting rose at 3.40 p.m.

United Nations

S/PV.7659

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7659th meeting

Wednesday, 30 March 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Gaspar Martins	(Angola)
Members:	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Yoshikawa
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2016/233)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2016/233)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/289, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by France, Japan, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Uruguay.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/233, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2277 (2016).

I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Gata Mavita wa Lufuta (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): As Angola's presidency of the Security Council is coming to an end, allow me to convey to you, Sir, the full esteem and appreciation of my delegation for the mastery with which you have led the Security Council's work this month, and for the expertise and competence with which you have fulfilled your mission. I take this opportunity to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak before the Council at this meeting on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

My delegation notes the adoption a moment ago of resolution 2277 (2016), on the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). While thanking the Council for this act, and through it the United Nations, my Government regrets and cannot hide its disappointment that the resolution chooses to ignore the relevant views of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on key issues involving its future. I therefore wish to comment briefly on certain points, in particular regarding the elections, the fight against armed groups and the drawdown of MONUSCO.

With respect to the elections, as His Excellency Mr. Raymond Tshibanda, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, reaffirmed before the Council on 23 March (see S/PV.7654), my country attaches great importance to the organization of free elections that meet international standards of inclusiveness, transparency and credibility. The insistence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of my country on the importance that the Democratic Republic of the Congo attaches to peace and stability should not be interpreted as an excuse for my country to postpone the elections. The leader of the Congolese diplomatic corps simply meant that, given our experience in the elections of 2006 and 2011, the necessary requirements and conditions essential to the proper conduct of elections must be met in such a manner that they are in no way tainted by violence either before, during or after their organization, and that the results do not give rise to disputes.

Regarding the delay in the electoral process, which the Council has deplored, it is due to one section of the opposition that, after procrastinating recklessly, is causing the stalemate in the process. That group continues to hinder dialogue to this day. Moreover, in the view of my delegation, the Council ought not to have encroached on powers that, under the law of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, fall to the jurisdiction of the National Independent Electoral Commission. In that context, it could have— as it has done in the past— left the setting of all upcoming deadlines, including for the legislative and presidential elections, to the competence of Commission, to which it has recommended the publication of a revised overall electoral calendar.

My delegation welcomes the recommendation and support of the Council for the political dialogue, thereby endorsing the initiative of His Excellency Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Republic, who called for its organization a few months ago. The national dialogue will be a landmark in the collective assumption of ownership of our country's future.

My Government reaffirms its determination to pursue its efforts to secure the eastern part of its territory. It will therefore pursue the eradication of armed groups and negative forces so as to stabilize the situation in order to enable our people to live in peace, to go freely about their business and to devote themselves to the development of their country. The Security Council will agree that this objective can be achieved only with the cooperation of all countries of the region, especially those that are concerned with the situation in the eastern part my country. By combining our efforts, we can together make our region a haven of peace, as the Council has always hoped it would become. We recognize, however, that the failure of some countries of the region to honour their commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region constitutes a danger that could undermine those efforts.

It is with that concern in mind that my delegation cannot conceal its surprise that the Council has made no reference to the serious situation described in the latest report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2015/797). Indeed, according to the report, the Group of Experts established by resolution 1533 (2004) refers to Burundian refugees who had been recruited in a neighbouring country, given military training by that country, armed and infiltrated into the Democratic Republic of the Congo with Congolese voting cards to sow unrest in Burundi. My delegation cannot understand how the Council can remain silent on such a serious situation, which has been brought to its attention by its own experts. My country, which already suffers crimes of all kinds committed by armed groups and negative forces against its people, cannot agree to become yet again the safe haven of a new foreign armed group.

Concerning the gradual drawdown of MONUSCO, my Government also regrets that the Council has been unable to respond favourably to the legitimate request addressed to it by my country. My delegation has trouble accepting the Council's position on this issue, to the extent that it has not taken into account the figure of 1,700 men recommended by the Secretary-General. We believe that this position shows a lack of flexibility that may affect the mood of the work on the ground and sap the enthusiasm inspired by the new MONUSCO leadership. Nor can we understand the justification that the current workforce of MONUSCO must be maintained in order to address the various threats it faces, given the fact that after 17 years in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and with the financial and logistical resources available to it, MONUSCO could have achieved more results if outcomes were dependent on greater numbers. Yet its record is mixed. This means, and we should not hesitate to say, that the troubles plaguing MONUSCO are deep and deserve careful consideration. Moreover, my delegation also cannot understand how the Security Council could adopt a resolution that paints an outdated picture of developments and the progress achieved on the ground by our country.

Regardless of all that, my Government will pursue, in accordance with its national and international commitments, the implementation of its various projects and all the multisectoral reforms it has undertaken over the past decade in the interests of its people.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.

United Nations

S/PV.7660

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7660th meeting

Wednesday, 30 March 2016, 10.25 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Gaspar Martins	(Angola)
Members:	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Yoshikawa
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015) (S/2016/272)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015) (S/2016/272)

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/272, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015).

I now give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien: After five years of senseless and brutal conflict, we all have been longing for a glimmer of hope that the suffering of the Syrian people might finally be coming to an end. The past few weeks have brought such a glimmer, with far fewer civilians killed and injured since the cessation of hostilities came into effect one month ago. In some parts of the country at least, it has given a respite to people, who have told us loud and clear that all they want is to be safe and for their families to be protected from violence.

There has also been progress on humanitarian access, with the United Nations and partners reaching some additional besieged and hard-to-reach areas, some for the first time in many months or even years. However, much more is required, and we must continue to seek access to all those who need help. There remains no substitute for the process of permissions and careful negotiations with all parties for safe access to areas where vulnerable people are in order to meet their humanitarian needs.

I very much welcome the resumption of the political talks last week, led by Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura. All of us must rally behind his tireless efforts to find a political solution that brings an end to the conflict and meets the aspirations of the Syrian people. After a chronicle of missed opportunities, this is the time for the various parties to come together and put an end to this horrendous chapter in Syria's history.

I will focus this briefing on the latest information on humanitarian access. I am pleased to report that we have seen some signs of progress over the past few weeks. Humanitarian access has opened up to some besieged and hard-to-reach areas. Since the beginning of the year, we have reached 150,000 people in 11 out of the 18 besieged areas in Syria through inter-agency convoys. Some of the places, such as Madaya, Zabadani, Foah and Kefraya, collectively known as the four towns, have been reached each month this year.

Efforts are also ongoing in order to safely reach the 200,000 people besieged in parts of Deir ez-Zor city through high-altitude air drops led by the World Food Programme (WFP). Furthermore, through inter-agency convoys we have reached some 199,000 people in hard-to-reach locations, including Al-Waer and Al-Houla in Homs governorate and Bloudan in Rural Damascus governorate, as well as around 50,000 people in other priority cross-line locations where needs are dire. Since mid-February, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East has also been able to provide assistance to an estimated 19,000 Palestine refugees in Yalda, Babila and Beit Sahem, including an estimated 6,000 civilians from the besieged area of Yarmouk.

I also emphatically welcome the Government of Syria's recent commitment to simplifying the administrative procedures for cross-line convoys, answering our requests within seven days of submission and ensuring that the necessary facilitation letters are issued in three days. I am pleased to report that the Government of Syria provided a response to our inter-agency convoy plan for April within the specified time frame. Last year, more than 75 per cent of requests were not answered at all. I also take note of the Syrian authorities' recent approvals for reaching additional hard-to-reach, besieged and other priority locations across conflict lines. Based on approvals received to date, the United Nations is currently working to deliver assistance before the end of April to more than 800,000 people with acute needs in those locations. In addition, assuming that the parties facilitate access and that security conditions allow it, UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) aim to implement a nationwide vaccination campaign that would target about 1 million children.

Even as we acknowledge the recent progress on humanitarian access, we must also recognize that it is only a first step towards what is required. If truth be told, we are a long way from the sustained, unconditional and unimpeded access that is required of the parties under international law and that the Council has continued to demand in its resolutions. Humanitarian conditions remain dire throughout the country, with some 13.5 million people still in need, and we are still facing daily obstacles to our ability to reach those who need our help the most. We have shared details of those obstacles with member States that have influence on the parties in order to see what more they can do to break the barricades to speedy, safe and unimpeded access, relief and evacuations of the sick and wounded.

Many of the 4.6 million people who are in need in besieged and hard-to-reach areas still remain beyond our reach, owing to insecurity and to obstructions by the parties. Even where we are now getting responses, they are often not approved. So far in 2016, we have reached only some 30 per cent of people in besieged areas and less than 10 per cent of those in hard-to-reach areas. Despite recent approvals for some, the Syrian authorities continue not to give approval for certain locations. From the recently submitted plan for cross-line convoys in April, only six of 11 locations were approved by the Syrian authorities, and for some locations they specified delivery quantities that would mean that we could cover only a portion of the population in each area. We are still without approval for three besieged areas that are mere minutes by car from United Nations warehouses in Damascus — Duma, East Harasta and Darayya. The situation in those areas is dreadful, particularly in Darayya, where we continue to receive reports of severe shortages of food, clean water, medicines, electricity and basic commodities, with people's food security and nutrition status believed to be disastrous. There are even reports of people forced to eat grass. The daily misery in those areas shames us all.

The humanitarian situation in many hard-to-reach areas also remains critical. For example, I continue to be deeply troubled about the conditions for the more than 210,000 civilians in northern rural Homs, specifically the towns of Rastan, Talbiseh, Al-Houla, Ter Mallah and Taldo, as well as 15,000 people in the adjacent area of Hirbnafsah and surrounding communities in rural Hama. The people there have essentially no possibility of moving in or out of the areas, and have diminishing access to clean water, medical care and food. The recent convoy to Al-Houla was vital, and approvals for convoys to the other parts of northern rural Homs give hope that we will be able to alleviate some of the suffering, but we remain extremely concerned about the situation facing civilians in those areas. Nor should we forget the situation of the nearly 2 million people estimated to be living under daily oppression and terror in areas held by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. We have little or no access to them and continue to receive reports of widespread human-rights abuses.

Even when we do gain access, serious concerns remain about the ongoing exclusion and removal of medical supplies and treatments from convoys. More than 80,000 treatments have been excluded or removed from convoys in 2016, the vast majority by the Syrian authorities. The range of the items removed is scandalous, from items for treating child malnutrition to medicine for preventing bleeding after childbirth. There can be no possible justification for removing those or any other basic medical items. I call on all parties, particularly the Syrian authorities, to enable all necessary medical items and equipment, including surgical items, to be allowed onto the convoys.

Nor are medical evacuations from besieged and hard-to-reach areas being facilitated by the parties to the extent that they should be. While the United Nations and its partners continue to do their best to follow up on individual cases, that is clearly not enough, and people continue to die unnecessarily as a result. I am not in a position to put a number on that, but it is clearly unacceptable. Similarly, medical workers are not getting the access they need to undertake proper medical assessments and treat patients. Having a few hours with patients on the day of a convoy is simply not enough. We need regular access for medical and humanitarian workers for as many follow-up visits as are required.

While the situation is acute in besieged and hard-to reach areas, we must remember that this is a conflict that has affected nearly every Syrian. The destruction of essential infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, the devaluation of the currency, the impact of sanctions, rising food prices, shortages of fuel and electricity and a lack of clean water have exacted a high toll on a majority of Syrian families and communities throughout the country. We have to find ways of doing better and reaching all people in need, and we have to ensure that they have access to basic and essential services wherever they live.

As the Council knows, our objective as humanitarians is not political or military. It is about providing emergency aid and protection to people in desperate need and precarious circumstances wherever they are in Syria. For that to become a reality, however, the recent opening of access to some locations must be only the start of a step-change in access. Access must go beyond allowing more aid convoys to deliver limited supplies. We must move beyond the notion that one-off, ad hoc distributions of assistance to a particular besieged or hard-to-reach location are somehow sufficient and acceptable, because they are not and never will be. To even begin to address the full range of humanitarian and protection needs in those areas, what we need is a permanent stop to the fighting, an end to the sieges and safe, sustained, unconditional and unimpeded access, so that we can meaningfully reach all those in need as often as is required and by whatever route is necessary. We also need civilians to be able to move freely in and out of areas in order to access basic services and assistance, and we need that now, before it is too late.

I want to pay tribute to the courageous humanitarian organizations and workers who collectively come together to help millions of people each month through all available routes. In February, the World Food Programme, for example, delivered food for 3.8 million people; UNICEF provided water, sanitation and hygiene supplies for over 1.5 million people; WHO delivered over 800,000 treatments; and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees delivered support for almost 500,000 people. Our non-governmental organization partners also continue to assist hundreds of thousands of people each month, both from within Syria and across borders.

Over the past weeks, the United Nations and partners have scaled up assistance to people in need, including cross-border assistance from Turkey to meet the needs of the over 60,000 people newly displaced close to the Turkish border owing to the heavy fighting and aerial bombardment in Aleppo governorate throughout February, before the start of the cessation of hostilities.

Our challenge now is to scale up assistance further to reach the level required. We are ready to take advantage of any opportunity to assist people in need. On 15 March, five years into the conflict in Syria, 102 humanitarian agencies called for immediate and sustained access in Syria. I repeat that call today, particularly for the parties to the conflict and Member States with influence to guarantee full access for humanitarian and medical workers to assess the well-being of civilians in all communities and treat those who are sick and injured without obstacle or restriction; allow all humanitarian aid, as required by international humanitarian law, to reach, unimpeded, those who urgently need it — including medical supplies, surgical equipment and nutritional necessities; and support an urgently needed nationwide immunization campaign for children. These are practical and immediate actions that would mean the difference between life and death for many people. All parties to the conflict can agree on and implement them now.

The cessation of hostilities should also be the catalyst that finally brings an end to the indiscriminate use of weapons on civilians, residential areas, aid supply routes and other civilian infrastructure protected under international law. Already this year, far too many civilians have been killed or injured in direct or indiscriminate attacks by all parties, owing to the continued use of explosive weapons in populated areas, including through barrel bombs and other aerial weapons, shelling and car bombs. It is time to say enough is enough.

The lessons of history should tell us that peace cannot wait any longer in Syria. The consequences of failing to resolve the Syrian conflict in Syria, in the region and beyond are now lamentably clear. The past few weeks have shown, however, that when there is the right amount of political will, the parties and the international community can come together to find ways to reduce the suffering of civilians and engage in talks to bring an end to the conflict. It is the sincere hope of all humanitarians that these talks will pave the path to peace in Syria.

The President: I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

I now invite members to consultations to continue our discussions on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.

United Nations

S/PV.7661

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7661st meeting

Thursday, 31 March 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Gaspar Martins	(Angola)
Members:	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Mahmoud
	France	Mrs. Audouard
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation in Libya

Letter dated 4 March 2016 from the Panel of Experts on Libya established pursuant to resolution 1973 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/209)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Libya

Letter dated 4 March 2016 from the Panel of Experts on Libya established pursuant to resolution 1973 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/209)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Libya to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/293, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

I also wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/209, which contains a letter dated 4 March 2016 from the Panel of Experts on Libya established pursuant to resolution 1973 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2278 (2016).

I now give the floor to the representative of Libya.

Mr. Dabbashi (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for your leadership of the Council this month, and the members of the Council for their unanimous adoption of resolution 2278 (2016).

While today's resolution does not respond to our urgent request regarding the Libyan Investment Authority, it does reaffirm the sanctions directed at all those involved in the illegal export of Libyan crude oil. It also extends the mandate of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 1973 (2011). We have seen a visible improvement in the Panel's performance, based on its most recent report, as contained in document S/2016/209.

We have worked with the delegation of the United Kingdom and all the other members of the Security Council to ensure that the resolution just adopted represents an additional step that can help the Libyan people assure, safeguard and develop its natural resources. We believe that all Council members understand the problems that the Libyan Investment Authority is up against. We know of nothing that would be an obstacle to the approval of our request that the Investment Authority be enabled to manage its resources within the framework of the current assets freeze.

However, we were surprised by the Security Council's unfortunate refusal to respond to our request, which thereby makes it henceforth responsible for every loss incurred by the Libyan people. We are talking about profits that we could have amassed to the tune of $2 billion a year. That flies in the face of the fact that Council members continue to affirm their willingness to help the Libyan people and protect their resources. That disparity between deeds and words certainly does nothing to maintain the Council's credibility in the eyes of the Libyan people, and I hope that the Council will reconsider the issue as soon as possible and agree to the request expressed in our letter addressed to it.

I welcome the return of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord to Tripoli. As I have said a number of times, there can be no peace or security in Libya until that legitimate Government can work in a safe environment. There can be no question that the Presidency Council's return to Tripoli is a courageous, necessary and important step in confronting the extremist groups that have now been occupying the capital for two years and that have undermined all the revolution's gains, making the people's lives an intolerable hell.

In that context, I would like to commend the efforts of the Libyan armed forces, particularly the navy, which has helped us to take that step, and I urge all the armed groups and the Libyan people as a whole to support the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord in dealing with all the extremist and criminal groups that have tried to undermine the political process or commit acts of terrorism in the capital. That involves responding to the continuing incitement by the former Mufti Al-Sadeq Al-Gheriani and by the television channel run by his son, and that of the Canadian national of Libyan origin Abd Al-Bassit Ghweila. I urge all Libyan army and police officers to return to their posts in accordance with the requests of the Presidency Council.

Those extremists and criminals who attempt to undermine the political process are trying to jeopardize the legitimacy of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord. I would like to make it clear, however, that the Presidency Council and the General National Congress acquired that legitimacy in accordance with the Libyan Political Agreement, adopted by the House of Representatives, and those institutions still possess that legitimacy. The Presidency Council and the House of Representatives must work together in order to convene the General National Congress in order to approve the Government of National Accord, as represented by the Presidency Council, whether as is or after modifications have been made.

Most Libyans no longer consider the question of who will occupy the various offices of the Government of National Accord significant. They have endured displacement and fear for their lives and property. Their salaries have not been paid; they have no health services. They have only one option, and that is the Government of National Accord, whatever its failings. It represents the only way out of the crisis. All Libya's stakeholders must therefore work together to give the Government of National Accord the momentum it needs as soon as possible, and until then, the Presidency Council can green-light the various ministries and deputy ministers. We need the international community to respond to the Government, and I hope that today the Security Council will send a clear message of solid support for the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord and that that message will take the form of a press statement by the Council.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.

United Nations

S/PV.7662

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7662nd meeting

Thursday, 31 March 2016, 10.25 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Gaspar Martins	(Angola)
Members:	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Mahmoud
	France	Mrs. Audouard
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (S/2016/232)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of international peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (S/2016/232)

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/232, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

After consultations among Council members, I have been authorized to make the following statement on their behalf:

> "The Security Council takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (S/2016/232).
>
> "The Security Council regrets that progress made in the implementation of national and regional commitments under the PSC Framework remains limited and stresses the importance of the signatory States fully implementing their national and regional commitments under the PSC Framework, which remains essential for the achievement of lasting peace and security in the Great Lakes region.
>
> "The Security Council reiterates the importance of neutralizing all armed groups operating in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, the Allied Democratic Forces, the Lord's Resistance Army and the Mai Mai groups in line with Security Council resolution 2277 (2016). It notes, in this regard, the announcement of the resumption of joint military operations between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and calls for immediate restart of joint operations to be undertaken in earnest to bring about the complete neutralization of all armed groups operating in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.
>
> "The Security Council calls upon the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and Rwanda to strengthen their collaboration to ensure the repatriation of former Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) combatants located in Rwanda and Uganda, consistent with the Nairobi Declarations and in line with commitments under the PSC Framework and reiterates the importance of ensuring that all provisions of the signed documents are implemented swiftly and in good faith.
>
> "The Security Council recalls the regional commitment under the PSC Framework not to harbour war criminals or provide support to armed groups, including recruitment, and urges all countries in the Great Lakes region to implement this provision of the PSC Framework and to make concerted efforts to investigate any allegations that former M-23 members have committed serious crimes under international law and to hold accountable those responsible.
>
> "The Security Council is of the view that children have been major victims of the conflicts in the Great Lakes region, and stresses the absolute need to eliminate their recruitment into armed groups, and the need to empower young people and promote youth employment initiatives at the regional level.
>
> "The Security Council calls upon all countries in the Great Lakes region to comply with their obligations under international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and encourages them to actively pursue accountability for those who commit human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law.
>
> "The Security Council welcomes the credible and peaceful conduct of elections in some States of the Great Lakes region. The Security Council notes, however, that recent and ongoing electoral processes in some countries of the Great Lakes region raise deep concerns about the risk of instability, insecurity, the potential for violence, human rights violations and abuses and violations

of international humanitarian law, and further displacement of people, which impact all countries of the Great Lakes region.

"The Security Council urges regional support for initiatives aimed at promoting inclusive dialogue amongst national stakeholders and stresses the importance of opening political space to enable the full and free participation of peaceful political parties, civil society and the media in the political process. The Security Council further urges regional support for strengthening and improving capacity for elections and governance in the countries of the Great Lakes region. The Council calls on Member States in the Great Lakes region to take steps to ensure that electoral processes promote peace and security through timely, peaceful, inclusive and credible elections, in line with countries own constitutions and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, as applicable.

"The Security Council is gravely concerned that the continued illicit exploitation of and trade in natural resources in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Council urges the signatory States of the PSC Framework, regional organizations and the international community to coordinate their efforts to undercut the economic lifelines of armed groups that benefit from the illegal exploitation of and trade in natural resources, and prevent the exploitation of women and children in the trade of these resources.

"The Security Council takes note of the Regional Strategic Framework for the Great lakes region 2016-2017, presented to the Council by the Secretary-General, which outlines the United Nations development approach in support of the implementation of the PSC Framework under six pillars: sustainable natural resource management, economic integration and cross-border trade; food security and nutrition; mobility; youth and adolescents; sexual and gender-based violence; and justice and conflict prevention.

"The Security Council also notes that the Regional Strategic Framework seeks to shift the illegal exploitation of natural resources into legal, regulated business, more sustainable use of natural resources and its transformation into development outcomes, implying the transparent and accountable management of these resources, which could result in significant earnings for the states and the communities.

"The Security Council, without prejudice to the conclusions of the future mandate review of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, also takes note of the road map of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and the priorities identified for regional action.

"The Security Council stresses that the 2006 Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region and the PSC Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region are mutually reinforcing, and are crucial tools to achieve long-term peace and prosperity. The Council emphasizes that the PSC Framework demonstrates that peace, security and development are interlinked and underscores the importance of strengthening regional cooperation, including the deepening of economic integration.

"The Security Council urges the donor community to contribute to the implementation of the Regional Strategic Framework and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region's road map, as an effective platform for partnership, in support of Member States in the national and regional commitments aimed to address the root causes of conflicts, promote economic development and cooperation, and bring about durable peace in the Great Lakes region.

"The Security Council commends the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and welcomes the Private Sector Investment Conference which took place in Kinshasa on 24 and 25 February 2016, jointly organized by the Office of the Special Envoy and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), and hosted by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

"The Security Council further stresses that the momentum generated by the Private Sector Investment Conference should be built upon through the operationalization of the ICGLR Private Sector Forum to realize investments and stimulate job creation and livelihood opportunities as effective tools for conflict prevention and the consolidation of peace and security in the Great Lakes region.

"The Security Council underscores that solutions to the prevailing situation in the Great Lakes region should come within a regional perspective by addressing the root causes of conflicts, many of which are regional in nature, with cross-border issues linked to the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo assuming crucial significance, due to the large flows of natural resources and migrants and refugees, and activities of armed groups and criminal networks across the borders.

"The Security Council stresses that the forced displacement of millions of persons in the Great Lakes region is a key driver of conflict, leading to regional instability, insecurity, humanitarian consequences and human rights violations and abuses.

"The Security Council encourages regional initiatives aimed at increasing youth employment and livelihoods, to enhance young people's economic self-sufficiency and the development of entrepreneurial skills, particularly marginalized adolescents and young people in the border areas of the Great Lakes region countries and those formerly associated with armed groups.

"The Security Council shares the view expressed in the Regional Strategic Framework that there is an urgent need to address violence and discrimination against women and girls, including rape and other forms of sexual violence in the Great Lakes region, and take into account the link between women's participation in peace and security decision-making, for peace and gender equality.

"The Security Council supports the regional initiatives on the issue of gender-related violence in armed conflict to influence regional and local decision-makers, aimed at the implementation of the commitments of the Kampala Declaration addressing impunity for gender-based crimes at the country level and to improve women's visibility, empowerment and resilience.

"The Security Council, noting the link between justice and conflict prevention, calls upon countries of the Great Lakes region to hold accountable perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law and to effectively support measures of conflict prevention by ending the culture of impunity.

"The Security Council welcomes efforts by national Governments to reverse such trends by setting a strategy that seeks to realize tangible improvements in holding accountable those responsible for violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law and to build trust between citizens and Governments.

"The Security Council underlines the importance of peacebuilding efforts to prevent relapses into conflict and encourages close cooperation between the Peacebuilding Commission and relevant regional organizations.

"The Security Council takes note of the priority interventions set in the Regional Strategic Framework to strengthen institutions, mechanisms and capacities for conflict prevention, management, resolution and peacebuilding through cross-border initiatives and partnerships at the regional level, including the ICGLR and civil society organizations; strengthen regional efforts by increasing controls on the supply of small arms and light weapons, which are a major source of conflict in the Great Lakes region; and enhance judicial cooperation, including law enforcement, border control, prosecution services, judicial bodies and the legal profession, especially by improving cooperation between Governments, justice institutions and local communities, particularly in cross border areas of the Great Lakes region."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2016/2.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.

United Nations

S/PV.7663

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7663rd meeting

Thursday, 31 March 2016, 10.45 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Gaspar Martins	(Angola)
Members:	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Mahmoud
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of South Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: His Excellency Mr. Festus Mogae, Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission; Ms. Ellen Margrethe Løj, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan; Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Ms. Kate Gilmore, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Ms. Løj, who is joining the meeting today via video-teleconference from Juba.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Mogae.

Mr. Mogae: I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to again address the Security Council.

Following my last briefing to the Council on 19 February (see S/PV.7628), I must unfortunately report that the implementation of most aspects of the August 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan continues to be delayed. The key milestone for the initial element of the Agreement — the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity — has yet to be reached. Violations of the permanent ceasefire also continue, as most recently documented by the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism, in the states of Upper Nile, Western Equatoria and Western Bahr el-Ghazal.

The Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) has publicly released these violation reports so that the full details of the investigation are made known to the South Sudanese and to the broader international community. Notwithstanding the continuing trend, in recent days there has been notable progress, and the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity now seems within reach.

In response to the plan for transitional security arrangements for Juba, the capital, which I issued on 23 February in my capacity as Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, the first of the 1,370 troops of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in Opposition have now returned, by a combination of United Nations and charter aircraft.

The role of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan in the operation has been critical, not only in terms of making aircraft available, but also in providing crucial logistical support to this operation, both in Malakal and in Juba. Flights are planned to continue over the coming week, until the full complement of 1,370 has been transported. Following the arrival of these forces, the First Vice President-designate, representing the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in Opposition, has assured us that he will return to Juba, thus permitting the formation of the new government.

SPLM in Opposition representatives have confirmed that there are no further conditions or obstacles to the return of the First Vice President-designate, and therefore I am cautiously optimistic that the new Transitional Government will be in place by the middle of next month. While this is months behind schedule, it is a vital step forward in the implementation of the Agreement, which I welcome. That said, the parties can do more to prepare for the return of the First Vice President-designate to Juba and ensure that the formation of the new government is not itself destabilizing.

Although developments in recent days are positive, there is still much work to be done by the parties and by the international community in support of a more robust peace in South Sudan. As I observed in my statement to the Council in February, the act of forming the new Government will not automatically relieve the humanitarian, development, political, military and economic crises that the country continues to face. While both the present Government and the SPLA in Opposition have vowed to strengthen their cooperation with the humanitarian response, and the Government has formally announced that all military units have been ordered to cooperate with the humanitarian response, the overall situation remains dire, with millions remaining at risk. In economic terms, South Sudan's economy is in desperate trouble and urgent measures are needed by both this Government and the next to address the situation and implement agreed reforms and procedures.

As I said to the representatives of JMEC at our most recent meeting in Juba, without action on economic reform and restructuring, the Agreement will be imperilled. I urge the parties to consider what steps can be to taken immediately to mitigate the situation, as well as what steps can be taken immediately following formation of the new transitional government.

The parties must also turn their attention to the resolution of the State's internal administrative boundaries. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) communiqué of 31 January, later endorsed by JMEC, outlines the formation of a new, ad-hoc national boundary commission to review the number of States and their boundaries. It is critical that this commission be quickly established to address the issue and prevent any further destabilization.

I wish to reiterate my firm belief that the South Sudanese parties should continually be encouraged by IGAD, by the African Union and by the Council to respect the commitments in the Agreement. Such commitment is even more vital as we reach the cusp of the formation of the new Government. There is little time to be lost if the next two and a half years — the transition period provided for in the Agreement — are to be meaningful and see genuine implementation of the Agreement's provisions.

I thank the Security Council for its continued attention to the situation in South Sudan and urge that, at this critical time, the Council continue to focus on the situation in South Sudan.

The President: I thank Mr. Mogae for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Løj.

Ms. Løj: I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to provide this brief update to the Security Council on the situation in South Sudan. As the next regular report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan will be available in the coming weeks and in light of the statements of the other speakers today, I will focus my comments on key operational developments, including the support of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan.

Despite the signing of the peace agreement, violence continues in many areas of the country. In Upper Nile, tensions between the Dinka and Shilluk communities remain high following the outbreak of violence that occurred in the United Nations protection site in Malakal in February. Since that incident, UNMISS has been supporting humanitarian partners to re-establish facilities and restore service delivery within the site, while also providing force protection for food distribution both within the site and to the internally displaced persons who relocated to Malakal town. We have also taken measures to increase perimeter security at the site and we continue to engage closely with community leaders and the local government to prevent any resurgence of violence.

I welcome the United Nations Headquarters-led Board of Inquiry that has been constituted to assess the response of the Mission to the incident in Malakal, and stand ready to provide any support the team may need to conclude its investigation. Its findings, combined with the recommendations of the Mission's own preliminary investigation, will strengthen our ability to prevent such conflict from occurring in the future.

Elsewhere in the country, clashes between Government forces and armed groups continued in the Equatorias and in the greater Bahr el-Ghazal region, with reports of civilian deaths, as well as looting and the harassment of communities by Government forces. Jonglei continues to see a resurgence of intercommunal clashes, both in the Greater Pibor Area, and more recently, between communities in Pochalla. Warrap and Unity have also seen civilians killed in a continued cycle of violent retaliatory cattle raids. These conflicts are not new; they erupt out of historic social divisions and competition over limited resources and will likely continue to threaten longer-term peace and stability. Furthermore, the dramatic deterioration of the economic situation is continuing to take a heavy toll on the people of South Sudan and could have security implications. As an additional consequence, humanitarian needs are escalating and spreading rapidly across the country.

This overall context only underscores the urgent need to sustain momentum towards implementing the peace agreement. As Chairman Mogae has just highlighted, some very important wheels have begun to turn, in no small part because of the continued commitment of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) and partners. I wish to assure the members of the Council that the Mission is fully supporting this process under the coordination of the JMEC. Allow me to provide some examples of that support.

Over the past months, UNMISS has provided logistical and technical assistance to the Joint Military Ceasefire Commission in its efforts, including the clearing of land at some designated sites and the installation of sanitation facilities. The United Nations Mine Action Service has also worked to clear unexploded ordnance from the planned sites. Meanwhile, the Mission is supporting the Commission in the establishment of the joint Juba coordination centre, formerly known as the Joint Operation Centre.

UNMISS continues to provide air transport to move opposition forces to Juba, in line with the agreed transitional security arrangements. On 24 March, the Mission completed the first airlift of 22 high-ranking opposition officers from Pagak to Juba, including generals of the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition, who will constitute the leadership of the joint integrated Police and Strategic Defence and Security Review Board. Airlifts resumed on Monday, 28 March, with the transport of an additional 39 opposition forces from Malakal to Juba, including their light weapons, followed by a third batch of 40 the next day. We shall continue these operations throughout the week, weather permitting, and today 130 additional soldiers have arrived — 40 on a United Nations flight and 90 on a Troika-chartered plane.

The Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism continues its deployment across the country, with accommodation and other logistical support, including force protection, provided by UNMISS. The Mechanism has also taken on the additional task of verifying the redeployment sites for military forces outside Juba, in line with the transitional security arrangements. These are critical responsibilities, and we are providing the necessary support to the monitoring and verification teams on the ground to facilitate their investigations as much as possible.

South Sudan is at a critical juncture. While I am slightly optimistic that the developments that Chairperson Mogae and I have just highlighted are steps forward, we all know that enormous challenges and hurdles remain. In tandem with this measured progress, continued ceasefire violations and the rise of previously dormant intercommunal conflicts, coupled with difficulties in meeting the country's growing humanitarian needs, deplorable human rights abuses and the sharp economic downturn all threaten to derail the peace process. Sustained progress will require both parties to form the Transitional Government without further delay and to demonstrate the courage to compromise for the sake of peace. Most important, it will require South Sudan's leaders to begin to put the people first.

The formation of the Transitional Government is indeed a necessary step towards setting the country on a path to longer-term stability and improving the lives of the people, who have suffered far too much for far too long. But it is just a first step. The work does not end when Riek Machar returns to Juba to form the Transitional Government with President Salva Kiir. In fact, that is when the hard work of rebuilding the country has to start and difficult decisions must be taken. That is why we all need the continued support of the members of the Council and the sustained effort and cooperation of the United Nations, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the African Union, the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission and all partners. The road ahead will be long and difficult, but we must move ahead. The people of South Sudan deserve nothing less.

The President: I thank Ms. Løj for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien: I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in South Sudan. I thank the previous briefers — the Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Løj — for their very clear remarks.

When I briefed the Council last month, I drew attention to the deepening humanitarian crisis in South Sudan. Some 6 million people — more than half of the population — are currently in need of humanitarian assistance. Of these, a staggering 2.8 million people are severely food insecure, over 2 million people have been forced to flee their homes, and more than half of all school-aged children are not attending class.

Despite the Council's presidential statement S/PRST/2016/1 of 17 March, calling on all parties to protect civilians, allow people to move freely and to facilitate timely, full, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access, yet again I have to report that the situation remains dire. Civilians continue to be targeted, attacked and displaced, and acute humanitarian needs persist, exacerbated by recurrent access challenges. In addition to the unimaginable individual and community abuses that the people of South Sudan have sustained, I must also highlight the fact that, despite the call for a cessation of hostilities in the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, the geographic scope of the conflict has grown. In recent months, as we have just heard from Special Representative Løj, we have seen new outbreaks of violence in areas around Western Bahr el-Ghazal, Western Equatoria, Jonglei and Malakal. Such violence has resulted in the displacement of well over 150,000 people, with many forced to flee their homes repeatedly — some more than 10 times.

By way of example, on the same day that I briefed the Council last month, fighting erupted in Pibor and surrounding areas, resulting in the displacement of around 13,000 people. Further, some 8,000 internally displaced people seeking refuge in Mboro, Western Bahr el-Ghazal, were forced to flee that area again when fighting erupted on 21 March. A woman who had sought refuge in Mboro and then had to flee to Wau said, "We survived on leaves and turmeric; all our belongings, including food, were looted".

Let us not forget that nearly 200,000 people continue to seek protection inside United Nations protection of civilians sites, as they still do not feel that it is safe enough to return home. Regrettably, the sanctity of these sites has not been respected, and more than 25,000 people remain displaced as a result of the events in Malakal. Humanitarians and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan continue to work together to make the conditions in these sites as decent as possible. However, the sites will never be a replacement for the places that people call home.

Children remain particularly vulnerable to the expanding conflict. In recent months, children have been separated from their parents while trying to flee the fighting, including 84 documented cases following the events in Malakal. Moreover, schools and health facilities, which are inviolable under international humanitarian law, have been damaged or destroyed, denying children access to education and health care. These new conflict-afflicted areas are the same locations where people are most desperate for help. Displaced, food insecure and vulnerable, these are the populations we must be seeking to aid and protect. However, they cannot be reached by aid workers owing to a host of impediments that continue to hamper aid operations. In 2015, more than 900 access incidents were reported by humanitarian partners in South Sudan, representing a 14 per cent increase from the previous year and a 68 per cent increase from the year before that. This year the trend continues.

In the 14 days since the adoption of the presidential statement of 17 March, more than 17 incidents of obstruction of access for humanitarian activities have been reported, comprising interference by parties from individual armed actors through to national authorities. The true number is likely to be far higher, given that some humanitarian partners are reluctant to report every incident out of fear of retribution or harassment. For example, last week in Unity, local authorities demanded free transport to Juba aboard the contracted plane of an international non-governmental organization (NGO). When the pilots refused, citing their duty to uphold humanitarian principles, a truck loaded with armed men arrived at the airstrip and threatened to detain the pilots if they did not oblige. Such action compromises the ability of humanitarians to safely and effectively deliver humanitarian assistance and is simply unacceptable.

In Malakal, after the horrific violence in mid-February, humanitarians were denied river access to Wau Shilluk for over one month, disrupting the delivery of life-saving assistance to more than 27,000 people. In a location where homes and businesses had been looted or destroyed, leaving only minimal resources, the denial of access presents a genuine threat to lives. Access was finally granted when the remaining water and nutrition supplies were days away from exhaustion and schools had already closed, as supplies had run out. The lifting of restrictions came only after interventions from the humanitarian community, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, and visits by several ambassadors from various countries to Malakal to speak with the Governor.

Delays in the delivery of assistance cost lives and expend precious resources. What humanitarians need is timely, unimpeded access to those we assess to be in vital need, not ad hoc, case-by-case considerations after much attention, pressure and persuasion.

The challenge in South Sudan represents an increasing disconnect between the assurances at the national level and the actions of local groups. All too often, even when official assurances are received at the national level, they are not respected by local actors. Illegal exactions and taxes remain rampant, and humanitarian convoys are consistently subjected to demands for payment at checkpoints. Despite the Government's statement that humanitarians should not pay at such points, authorities at the local level have conveyed a very different message, noting that humanitarians should "expect" to make such payments. Convoys travelling from Juba to Bentiu by road recently reported more than 50 checkpoints, with each truck required to pay a total of more than 30,000 South Sudanese pounds, or about US $1,000, in exactions. Such extortions are unacceptable and must stop.

The United Nations Department of Safety and Security has also been denied access to conduct security risk assessments in areas where fighting has taken place. Since January 2016, security risk assessment missions have been denied six times in Central Equatoria alone. These risk assessments are a critical first step to assessing, preparing and enabling effective humanitarian action.

In addition to the expanding geographic scope of the conflict, new drivers of crises are emerging and vulnerabilities are being exacerbated, resulting in additional humanitarian and protection needs. Most notably, the deteriorating economic situation is driving instability. As a result of the economic crisis, the monthly cost of food and clean water for an average family now amounts to more than 10 times the salary of a teacher. Such pressures are felt most acutely in urban and population centres. In the north-western areas of Northern Bahr El Ghazal and Warrap, heightened food insecurity, compounded by an economic downturn and growing unrest, has resulted in the flight of some 38,000 people into East and South Darfur since the end of January.

On average, more than half of the access incidents reported involve violence against humanitarian personnel or their assets. When I briefed the Council last month, I reported that 47 humanitarian staff had been killed since December 2013. I am appalled to report that this number has now risen to 49. The most recent case is that of Mr. Yien Malouth, an integrated community caseworker for Save the Children, a husband and the father of two children, who was tragically shot in Akobo, Jonglei. Greater action must be taken to ensure the safety of humanitarian workers.

Since the beginning of 2016, there have been at least four major instances of the destruction or looting of humanitarian supplies and facilities. These have taken place in Malakal, Pibor and Western Equatoria. Vital goods such as nutritional supplements, educational materials and water-treatment supplies have been burned or deliberately destroyed. A conservative estimate places the value of humanitarian losses since the beginning of 2016 at around $10 million, including more than $5 million in damages to the Malakal protection-of-civilians site.

Much more important than the monetary losses is the loss of human life that results from these wanton attacks against humanitarian facilities and assets. Each time a facility or a compound is damaged or destroyed, and each time supplies are looted, vulnerable civilians are denied vital assistance.

Despite the challenges, humanitarian partners continue to stand in solidarity with the people of South Sudan. In 2015, and despite the access challenges presented to them, partners were able to reach more than 4.5 million people with assistance, often in the most remote areas. In the first two months of 2016 alone, partners reached more than 1 million people. Humanitarians continue to find innovative ways to save lives, even in areas where formal access is not granted. For example, partners reached more than 100,000 people with life-saving assistance in Unity last year amid violent conflict and access denials.

However, despite the courageous efforts of our colleagues on the front lines and the intensive work of humanitarian partners to scale up their capacity, a critical lack of funding continues to severely hobble the humanitarian effort today. Of the required $1.3 billion earmarked to reach more than 5 million people, only 9 per cent — yes, only 9 per cent — of the funding has been received from the international community. Amid a food and nutrition security crisis, NGO partners are scaling down nutrition and health programmes because they simply have not received the funding needed to operate. The small window of opportunity afforded by the dry season will close in the coming weeks, and the funding received has allowed humanitarians to pre-position only 35 per cent of the required supplies across the country. As a result, more supplies will have to be moved by air during the rainy season, increasing the cost of delivery by up to six times.

The Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights will speak in greater detail to the human rights violations and grave protection concerns in South Sudan, but what is clear from the humanitarian perspective is that both parties have failed to abide by their obligation to protect civilians and civilian facilities and simultaneously failed to allow full, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to those in critical need.

The terms of the peace agreement have clearly not been enough to halt the rapidly escalating and worsening situation and its implications for millions of civilians across the country. We need action. To this end, I ask the Council to call on the parties to the conflict and all armed actors operating in South Sudan to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law to protect civilians, allow free and unhindered humanitarian access and to protect humanitarian workers and their assets.

Let my message to the Council today be unequivocal. Since my last report, since the Peace Agreement, the hideous facts on the ground are that the humanitarian situation has severely worsened in that short time and continues to worsen, and the only measure I am using is the lives, the suffering and the deaths of the millions of innocent women, girls, boys and men caught up in the horrendous fight between two sides that have no care for the people they claim to represent. In that light, I call upon Security Council members to stand in solidarity with the people of South Sudan and to advocate within their areas of influence to seek an end to the unfolding humanitarian catastrophe.

The President: I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Gilmore.

Ms. Gilmore: On behalf of the High Commissioner, I thank the Council for this opportunity to brief it on the findings of the assessment mission to improve human rights, accountability, reconciliation and capacity in South Sudan.

In short, the findings are that despite the August 2015 Peace Agreement, human rights violations and abuses against the civilian population continue unabated. Since December 2013, all parties to the conflict have committed gross human rights violations and abuses, along with serious violations of international humanitarian law, including the killing of civilians, widespread sexual violence against women and girls, the pillaging and destruction of civilian property, including homes, humanitarian infrastructure, schools, medical facilities and even hospitals. Both the Government and the opposition have forcibly conscripted children, some as young as nine years of age, in violation of international human rights law, international criminal law and international humanitarian law.

The Sudan People's Liberation Army and allied militia systematically perpetrated rapes and other acts of violence against women, during its military offensive in Unity state. Rape, in particular, was used as a strategy to terrorize and punish civilians. From April to September last year, the United Nations recorded more than 1,300 reports of rape in Unity state alone. The High Commissioner, like the African Union Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan, finds that there are reasonable grounds to believe that allegations of gross violations, including those committed in 2015, may constitute war crimes and/or crimes against humanity.

The High Commissioner's report also finds a new and alarming spread of violence and insecurity to areas previously less affected by the conflict. In Western Equatoria, for example, the Government's intensively militarized response to insecurity has been met with resistance from an increasing number of armed defence groups, but it is civilians who are caught in the middle. Furthermore, space for the exercise of freedom of expression, including dissent, has narrowed considerably, with human rights defenders, journalists and other civil society actors subjected to intimidation, harassment, attack and detention without due process. That curtails democratic space, violates the State's international human rights obligations and, without any doubt, further undermines prospects for sustainable peace.

A legacy of violence and revenge underscores South Sudan's urgent need for accountability for both past and present-day human rights violations and abuses, as well as violations of international humanitarian law. Yet despite the repeated public and formal commitments given by the parties to the conflict to ending the violence and punishing the perpetrators, no evidence has been found of any genuine effort on the part of either the Government or the opposition to live up to those undertakings. If South Sudan, as a country, and its people, as rights-holders, are to realize sustainable peace, security and development, the long-standing and vicious cycle of impunity must be broken. The perpetrators of human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law and of other international crimes must be held to account. South Sudan must address the underlying problems and root causes, including historical grievances, that led not only to the current conflict, but undermine prospects for its enduring resolution.

The Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, notably its provisions on accountability and transitional justice, provides useful elements in that regard. Chapter V, for example, provides for the creation of a commission for truth, reconciliation and healing, a hybrid court for South Sudan, and a compensation and reparation authority. However, to date, as we have just heard, the Transitional Government of National Unity has not been put into place, and those other mechanisms are therefore not established, even though the African Union has taken some steps towards discussing the establishment of the hybrid court.

Transitional justice mechanisms should be established in line with international norms and standards. There must be genuine consultations based on the informed participation of victims, civil society actors, including women's groups, and all other relevant stakeholders. There must be needs assessments to inform efforts aimed at truth, reparations, reconciliation and ensuring non-recurrence. If such consultations are to be comprehensive, meaningful and inclusive, they must be conducted over a significantly longer period than the minimum one month stipulated in the Agreement. Above all, the necessary preconditions for the establishment of those transitional justice mechanisms — a complete cessation of hostilities, improved security, commensurate resources and a high level of political commitment — must all be met.

At its recently concluded thirty-first session, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution establishing a Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan. Its mandate is to monitor and report on the situation of human rights and provide guidance on transitional justice, accountability, reconciliation and healing. The Human Rights Council also mandated the new Commission to make recommendations on technical assistance to the Transitional Government to support transitional justice, accountability, reconciliation and healing. However, the mandate is predicated on the Transitional Government being fully operational, fully committed to ending the violence against the civilian population and fully cooperative with the hybrid court for South Sudan.

The formation of the accountability and transitional justice mechanisms for South Sudan will not be without their challenges, but they are essential. The High Commissioner calls on the African Union to swiftly establish the hybrid court, with a designated unit in support of witnesses and victims, including children and those subjected to sexual violence. However, he notes with concern that the court will try only the most senior officials responsible for human rights violations and abuses. Many more perpetrators need to face the justice that is so critical to lasting peace. That responsibility will fall to South Sudan's courts, which currently do not have the capacity to conduct such trials. Failure to address the deeply ingrained disregard for human life will only lead to further violations.

The only lasting and viable solution to the terror and pain perpetrated against the people of South Sudan is to dismantle the apparatus of violence, hold to account those who have imposed such egregious suffering and put an end to the cycle of impunity. Hostilities must cease promptly and conclusively, and the international community must do what is needed to support the Transitional Government of National Unity, once formed, so that these transitional justice mechanisms can be instigated to function fully and effectively throughout their necessary life span. Enduring peace in South Sudan and justice for its people requires that these steps be taken immediately and with urgency.

The President: I thank Ms. Gilmore for her briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of South Sudan.

Mr. Malok (South Sudan): I am pleased and honoured to address the Security Council under your presidency, Sir. Permit me to begin by congratulating you and your delegation on assuming that responsibility for the month of March and for the manner in which you have managed the presidency of the Security Council this month. I would like to assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation in your endeavours for the few remaining hours of your presidency.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Ellen Margrethe Løj, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS); Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian

Affairs; Ms. Kate Gilmore, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights; and Mr. Festus Mogae, Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), for their briefings, which have provided more depth with regard to the issues raised during this meeting.

First and foremost, I would like to reiterate to the Security Council the commitment of my Government to the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. Thus far, we have implemented what has been required of the parties by the Agreement. The Government of South Sudan is grateful for and appreciative of the efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the international community, including members of the Troika, and the European Union (EU), for enabling the parties to sign the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan in August 2015.

The implementation of the peace process is progressing well despite the delays in the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity. Nevertheless, the arrival in Juba of 22 Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A in Opposition) senior police officers, 39 and 40 commissioned and non-commissioned officers, respectively, as well as the 15 bodyguards of Mr. Riek Machar — we have received a total number of 130 troops in Juba — is a step in the right direction.

My Government has committed to transporting the SPLA in Opposition forces from Kaldak to Malakal, while some of the forces are in Bentiu and Pagak. The forces in Pagak will be airlifted from Gambella in Ethiopia. We acknowledge and appreciate the assistance of UNMISS, the Troika and the EU in airlifting them to Juba. As agreed by the parties and JMEC, by the end of this week, if everything remains as planned and UNMISS, the Troika and the EU continue to airlift the SPLM/A in Opposition from the aforementioned locations, the entire 1,370 agreed forces will be in Juba, paving the way for Mr. Riek Machar's eventual arrival there. Thereafter, the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity will be completed.

As far as the humanitarian situation in the country is concerned, as I stated before the Council in my statement last month (S/PV.7628), the humanitarian situation in my country has not been exclusively caused by conflict, as the humanitarians would want the world to believe. As we focus on the conflict-related humanitarian situation, we should not forget the dire situation caused by climate change, in particular long drought and heavy rains, which more often than not have a devastating effect on the population.

The 1996 World Food Summit described a state of food security as existing when all constituents within a nation State, at all periods of time, have both physical as well as economic access to nurturing food in a sufficient quantity. Dietary needs must be met and preferences should support a healthy and active lifestyle. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, the four critical pillars of food security have been identified as the availability of food, access to the population, utilization and, finally, stability. The principal consideration for South Sudan as a new country is the fact that the right to food is inherent within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and is vitally important in order to enjoy other rights. Similarly, while the 1996 World Food Summit established that food insecurity should not be employed as a tool for political or economic pressure, the reality is less clear.

It is the hope of the Government of South Sudan that with the implementation of the Peace Agreement and the Non-Governmental Organization Act, governance and the humanitarian situation will improve and allow the displaced persons both in camps for internally displaced persons and points of contact to return home. The Government of South Sudan regrets the incident reports by the humanitarian agencies and the loss of the lives of some humanitarian workers. It is not the wish of the Government of South Sudan to continue to fall into the abyss. It is certainly in our interest to promote stability and national healing. Considering the reports on the ground, the Government of South Sudan commits to providing as much assistance as it can to the community of humanitarian workers in order to help facilitate their work, as they aid our people with vital services. It is our hope that there will be a decrease in these regrettable incidents and that normalcy, an unknown phenomenon in South Sudan, will begin to become a reality.

I would like to conclude by saying that my Government has officially responded to the recent Human Rights Council report on my country. My delegation also acknowledges the decision of the Human Rights Council, at its last cycle, to establish a three-person Commission to report annually to it. My country is also preparing its first universal periodic review report, to be delivered in October. Nevertheless, my Government does not accept the allegation of organized and systemic killing, torture and rape attributed to the Government's soldiers and its allied militia. I would like to quote here from the response of my Government:

> "It is acknowledged that the SPLA, the SPLA-IO and other criminals use the same uniform. Unless the culprits are physically apprehended, it is impossible to determine whether it is the Government's soldiers and its allied militia, the SPLA-IO or other armed criminals who committed the crime."

That quote is consistent with a previous report of the Secretary-General, which stated that the SPLA uniform is widely available.

The President: Before inviting Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject, as this is the last scheduled meeting of the Council for the month of March, I would like to express the sincere appreciation of the delegation of Angola to the members of the Council, especially my colleagues the Permanent Representatives, their respective staff and to the Secretariat of the Council for all the support they have given to us.

Indeed it has been a busy month, and one in which we rallied to consensus on several important issues within our purview. We could not have done it alone and without the hard work, support and positive contributions of every delegation and the representatives of the Secretariat, as well as all relevant conference service officers. As we end our presidency, I know I speak on behalf of the Council in wishing the delegation of China good luck in the month of April.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.